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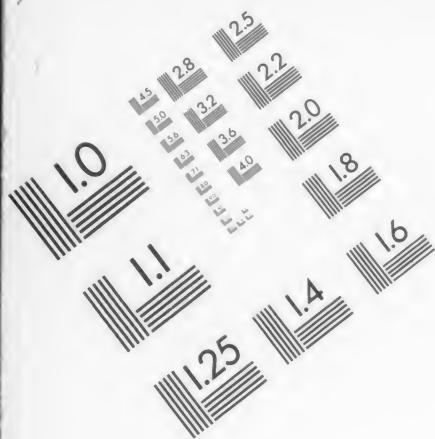


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No. 2.

THE
CHURCH AND THE CLERGY:
SHOWING THAT
RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS
DERIVE NO COUNTENANCE FROM
THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY,
AND THAT THEY ARE NOT RECOMMENDED
BY PUBLIC UTILITY:
WITH SOME OBSERVATIONS ON
THE CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT
OF
ENGLAND AND IRELAND,
AND ON
THE SYSTEM OF TITHES.

BY THE LATE
JONATHAN DYMOND.

"What is a Church? Let Truth and Reason speak,
They would reply, 'The faithful, pure, and meek
From christian folds, the one selected race,
Of all professions, and in every place.'"
CRAEBBE, "*The Boro'*."

LONDON:

Printed by E. Couchman, 10, Throgmorton Street.

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1835.

Sixth Edition.—Price Sixpence, or 25s. per Hundred.

PREFACE TO THE FIFTH EDITION.

The author of these Remarks upon the subject of Church and Clergy died in the spring of 1828, and his works, from which the following pages are extracted by permission of the author's representatives, were first before the public in 1829, and reprinted in a second edition in 1830. They are published in three Essays. The first Essay is divided into two parts; the first of which is entitled "*Principles of Morality*," and the second "*Subordinate Means of discovering the Divine Will*." The second Essay is entitled "*Private Rights and Obligations*;" and the third "*Political Rights and Obligations*," the fourteenth, fifteenth, and part of the sixteenth chapters of which form the contents of this Pamphlet. These Extracts do not embrace the whole of the author's views on the subject of a provision for the support of Christian Ministers; for a fuller explanation of which, the reader is referred to the remainder of the sixteenth chapter.

The cordial reception which this Pamphlet has met with at the hands of that large and influential class of society, who may be called thinking men, induces the editor to prefix a few lines written by the author in his introductory notice to the work on the "*Principles of Morality*," to assist the reader in forming a correct judgment of his views upon subjects at once so deeply important and interesting.

"Of the third Essay, in which some of the great questions of Political Rectitude have been examined, the subjects are in themselves sufficiently important. The application of sound and pure Moral Principles to questions of Government, of Legislation, of the Administration of Justice, or of Religious Establishments, is manifestly of great interest; and the interest is so much the greater, because these subjects have usually been examined, as the writer conceives, by other and very different standards.

"The reader will probably find, in each of these Essays, some principles or some conclusions respecting human duties to which he has not been accustomed; some opinions called in question which he has habitually regarded as being indisputably true; and some actions exhibited as forbidden by Morality, which he has supposed to be lawful and right. In such cases, I must hope for his candid investigation of the truth; and that he will not reject conclusions but by the detection of inaccuracy in the reasonings from which they are deduced. I hope he will not find himself invited to alter his opinions or his conduct without being shown why; and if he is conclusively shown this, that he will not reject truth, because it is new or unwelcome.

"With respect to the present influence of the principles which these Essays illustrate, the author will feel no disappointment if it is not great. It is not upon the expectation of such influence that his motive is founded, or his hope rests. His motive is to advocate Truth, without reference to its popularity, and his hope is, to promote, by these feeble exertions, an approximation to that state of purity which he believes it is the design of God shall eventually beautify and dignify the condition of mankind."

SECTION I.

RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS.

A large number of persons embark from Europe and colonize an uninhabited territory in the South Sea. They erect a government,—suppose a republic,—and make all persons of whatever creed, eligible to the legislature. The community prospers and increases. In process of time a member of the legislature, who is a disciple of John Wesley, persuades himself that it will tend to the promotion of religion that the preachers of methodism should be supported by a national tax; that their stipends should be sufficiently ample to prevent them from necessary attention to any business but that of religion; and that accordingly they shall be precluded from the usual pursuits of commerce and from the professions. He proposes the measure. It is contended against by the episcopalians, and the independents, and the catholics, and the unitarians,—by all but the adherents to his own creed. They insist upon the equality of civil and religious rights, but in vain. The majority prove to be methodists; they support the measure: the law is enacted; and methodism becomes thenceforth the religion of the state. This is a *Religious Establishment*.

But it is a religious establishment in its best form; and perhaps none ever existed of which the constitution was so simple and so pure. During one portion of the papal history, the Romish church was indeed not so much an "establishment" of the state as a separate and independent constitution. For though some species of alliance subsisted, yet the Romanists did not acknowledge, as protestants now do, that the power of *establishing* a religion resides in the state.

In the present day other immunities are possessed by ecclesiastical establishments than those which are necessary to constitute the institution,—such for example, as that of exclusive eligibility to the legislature: and other alliances with the civil power exist than that which necessarily results from any preference of a particular faith,—such as that of placing ecclesiastical patronage in the hands of a government, or of those who are under its influence. From these circumstances it happens, that in inquiring into the propriety of religious establishments, we cannot confine ourselves to the inquiry whether they would be proper in their simplest

form, but whether they are proper as they usually exist. And this is so much the more needful, because there is little reason to expect that when once an ecclesiastical establishment has been erected,—when once a particular church has been selected for the preference and patronage of the civil power,—that preference and patronage will be confined to those circumstances which are necessary to the subsistence of an establishment at all.

It is sufficiently obvious that it matters nothing to the existence of an established church, what the faith of that church is, or what is the form of its government. It is not the creed which constitutes the establishment, but the preference of the civil power; and accordingly the reader will be pleased to bear in mind that neither in this chapter nor in the next have we any concern with religious opinions. Our business is not with churches but with church *establishments*.

The actual history of religious establishments in christian countries, does not differ in essence from that which we have supposed in the South Sea. They have been erected by the influence or the assistance of the civil power. In one country a religion may have owed its political supremacy to the superstitions of a prince; and in another to his policy or ambition; but the effect has been similar. Whether superstition or policy, the contrivances of a priesthood, or the fortuitous predominance of a party, have given rise to the established church, is of comparatively little consequence to the fundamental principles of the institution.

Of the *divine right* of a particular church to supremacy I say nothing; because none with whom I am at present concerned to argue imagine that it exists.

The only ground upon which it appears that religious establishments can be advocated are, first, that of example or approbation in the primitive churches; and, secondly, that of public utility.

I. The primitive church was not a religious establishment in any sense or in any degree. No establishment existed until the church had lost much of its purity. Nor is there any expression in the New Testament, direct or indirect, which would lead a reader to suppose that Christ or his apostles regarded an establishment as an eligible institution. "We find in his religion, *no scheme of building up a hierarchy or of ministering to the views of human governments.*"—"Our religion, as it came out of the hands of its Founder and his apostles, exhibited *a complete abstraction from all views either of ecclesiastical or civil policy.*"¹ The evidence which these facts supply respecting the moral character of religious establishments, whatever be its weight, tends manifestly to show that that character is not good. I do not say because christianity exhibited this "complete abstraction," that it therefore necessarily *condemned* establishments; but I say that the bearing and the tendency of this negative testimony is against them.

¹ Paley: *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 2, c. 2.

In the discourses and writings of the first teachers of our religion we find such absolute disinterestedness, so little disposition to assume political superiority, that to have become the members of an *established* church would certainly have been inconsistent *in them*. It is indeed almost inconceivable that they could ever have desired the patronage of the state for themselves or for their converts. No man conceives that Paul or John could have participated in the exclusion of any portion of the christian church from advantages which they themselves enjoyed. Every man perceives that to have done this, would have been to assume a new character, a character which they had never exhibited before, and which was incongruous with their former principles and motives of action. But why is this incongruous with christianity? Upon this single ground therefore, there is reason for the sentiment of "many well informed persons, that it seems extremely questionable whether the religion of Jesus Christ *admits* of any civil establishment at all."¹

I lay stress upon these considerations. We all know that much may be learnt respecting human duty by a contemplation of the spirit and temper of christianity as it was exhibited by its first teachers. When the spirit and temper is compared with the essential character of religious establishments, they are found to be incongruous,—foreign to one another,—having no natural relationship or similarity. I should regard such facts, in reference to any question of rectitude, as of great importance; but upon a subject so intimately connected with religion itself, the importance is peculiarly great.

II. The question of the *utility* of religious establishments is to be decided by a comparison of their advantages and their evils.

Of their advantages, the first and greatest appears to be that they provide, or are assumed to provide, religious instruction for the whole community. If this instruction be left by the state to be cared for by each christian church as it possesses the zeal or the means, it may be supposed that many districts will be destitute of any public religious instruction. At least the state cannot be assured before hand that every district will be supplied. And when it is considered how great is the importance of regular public worship to the virtue of a people, it is not to be denied that a scheme, which by destroying an establishment, would make that instruction inadequate or uncertain, is so far to be regarded as of questionable expediency. But the effect which would be produced by dispensing with establishments is to be estimated, so far as is in our power, by facts. Now dissenters are in the situation of separate unestablished churches. If they do not provide for the public officers of religion voluntarily, they will not be provided for. Yet where is any considerable body of dissenters to be found who do not provide themselves with a chapel

¹ Simpson's *Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings*.

and a preacher? And if those churches which are not *established*, do in fact provide public instruction, how is it shown that it would not be provided although there were no established religion in a state? Besides, the dissenters from an established church provide this under peculiar disadvantages; for after paying, in common with others, their quota to the state religion, they have to pay in addition to their own. But perhaps it will be said that dissenters from a state religion are actuated by a zeal with which the professors of that religion are not; and that the legal provision supplies the deficiency of zeal. If this be said, the inquiry imposes itself,—How does this disproportion of zeal arise? Why should dissenters be more zealous than churchmen? What account can be given of the matter, but that there is something in the patronage of the state which induces apathy upon the church that it prefers? One other account may indeed be offered,—that to be a dissenter is to be a positive religionist, whilst to be a churchman is frequently only to be nothing else; that an establishment embraces all who are not embraced by others; and that if those whom other churches do not include were not cared for by the state religion, they would not be cared for at all. This is an argument of apparent weight, but the effect of reasoning is to diminish that weight. For what is meant by "including," by "caring for," the indifferent and irreligious? An established church only *offers* them instruction: it does not "compel them to come in;" and we have just seen that this offer is made by unestablished churches also. Who doubts whether in a district that is sufficient to fill a temple of the state religion, there would be found persons to offer a temple of public worship though the state did not compel it? Who doubts whether this would be the case if the district were inhabited by dissenters? and if it would not be done supposing the inhabitants to belong to the state religion, the conclusion is inevitable, that there is a tendency to indifference resulting from the patronage of the state.

Let us listen to the testimony of Archbishop Newcome. He speaks of Ireland, and says "Great numbers of country parishes are *without churches*, notwithstanding the largeness and frequency of parliamentary grants for building them;" but "meeting houses and Romish chapels which are *built and repaired with greater zeal*, are in *sufficient numbers* about the country."¹ This is remarkable testimony indeed. That church which is patronised and largely assisted by the state, does not provide places for public worship: those churches which are not patronised and not assisted by the state, do provide them, and provide them in "sufficient numbers" and "with greater zeal." What then becomes of the argument, that a church establishment is necessary in order to provide instruction which would not otherwise be provided?

Yet here one point must be conceded. It does not follow be-

¹ See Gisborne's *Duties of Men*.

cause one particular state religion is thus deficient that none would be more exemplary. The fault may not be so much in religious establishments *as such*, as in that particular establishment which obtains in the instance before us.

Kindred to the testimony of the Irish primate is the more cautious language of the archdeacon of Carlisle:—"I do not know," says he, "that it is in any degree true that the influence of religion is the greatest where there are the fewest dissenters."¹ This I suppose may lawfully be interpreted into positive language,—that the influence of religion *is* the greatest where there are numerous dissenters. But if numerous adherents to unestablished churches be favourable to religion, it would appear that although there were *none* but unestablished churches in a country, the influence of religion would be kept up. If established churches are practically useful to religion, what more reasonable than to expect that where they possessed the more exclusive operation, their utility would be the greatest? Yet the contrary it appears is the fact. It may indeed be urged that it is the existence of a state religion which animates the zeal of the other churches, and that in this manner the state religion does good. To which it is a sufficient answer, that the benefit, if it is thus occasioned, is collateral and accidental, and offers no testimony in favour of establishments as such;—and this is our concern. Besides, there are many sects to animate the zeal of one another, even though none were patronised by the state.

To estimate the relative influence of religion in two countries is no easy task. Yet I believe if we compare its influence in the United States with that which it possesses in most of the European countries which possess state religions, it will be found that the balance is in favour of the community in which there is no established church: at any rate, the balance is not so much against it as to afford any evidence in favour of a state religion. A traveller in America has remarked, "There is more religion in the United States than in England, and more in England than in Italy. The closer the monopoly, the less abundant the supply."² Another traveller writes almost as if he had anticipated the present disquisition—"It has been often said, that the disinclination of the heart to religious truth renders a state establishment absolutely necessary for the purpose of christianizing the country. Ireland and America can furnish abundant evidence of the fallacy of such an hypothesis. In the one country we see an ecclesiastical establishment of the most costly description utterly unoperative in dispelling ignorance or refuting error; in the other no establishment of any kind, and yet religion making daily and hourly progress, promoting inquiry, diffusing knowledge, strengthening the weak, and mollifying the hardened."³

In immediate connection with this subject is the argument that

¹ Paley: *Evidences of Christianity*.
² Hall.

³ Duncan's *Travels in America*.

Dr. Paley places at the head of those which he advances in favour of religious establishments,—that *the knowledge and profession of christianity cannot be upheld without a clergy supported by legal provision, and belonging to one sect of christians.*¹ *The justness of this proposition is founded upon the necessity of research.* It is said that "christianity is an historical religion," and that the truth of its history must be investigated; that in order to vindicate its authority, and to ascertain its truths, leisure and education and learning are indispensable,—so that such "an order of clergy is necessary to perpetuate the evidences of revelation, and to interpret the obscurity of those ancient writings in which the religion is contained." To all this there is one plain objection, that when once the evidences of religion are adduced and made public, when once the obscurity of the ancient writings is interpreted, the work, so far as discovery is concerned, is done; and it can hardly be imagined that an established clergy is necessary in perpetuity to do that which in its own nature can be done but once. Whatever may have been the validity of this argument in other times, when few but the clergy possessed any learning, or when the evidences of religion had not been sought out, it possesses little validity now. These evidences are brought before the world in a form so clear and accessible to literary and good men, that in the present state of society there is little reason to fear they will be lost for want of an established church. Nor is it to be forgotten, that with respect to our own country, the best defences of christianity which exist in the language, have not been the work either of the established clergy or of members of the established church. The expression that such "an order of clergy is necessary to perpetuate the evidences of revelation," appears to contain an illusion. Evidences can in no other sense be perpetuated than by being again and again brought before the public. If this be the meaning, it belongs rather to the teaching of religious truths than to their discovery; but it is upon the *discovery*, it is upon the opportunity of *research*, that the argument is founded: and it is particularly to be noticed, that this is the primary argument which Paley adduces in deciding "the first and most fundamental question upon the subject."

It pleases Providence to employ human agency in the vindication and diffusion of his truth; but to employ the expression "the knowledge and profession of christianity," cannot be upheld without an established clergy, approaches to irreverence. Even a rejector of christianity says, "If public worship be conformable to reason, reason without doubt will prove adequate to its vindication and support. If it be from God it is profanation to imagine that it stands in need of the alliance of the state."² And it is clearly untrue in fact; because, without such a clergy, it is actually upheld; and because, during the three first centuries,

¹ See Moral and Political Philosophy, b. 6, c. 10.

² Godwin's Pol. Just. 2, 608.

the religion subsisted and spread and prospered without any encouragement from the state. And it is remarkable too that the diffusion of christianity in our own times in pagan nations, is effected less by the clergy of *established* churches than by others.¹

Such are amongst the principal of the direct advantages of religious establishments as they are urged by those who advocate them. Some others will be noticed in inquiring into the opposite question of their disadvantages.

These disadvantages respect either the institution itself,—or religion generally,—or the civil welfare of a people.

I. The institution itself. "The single end we ought to propose by religious establishments is, the preservation and communication of religious knowledge. Every other idea, and every other end, that have been mixed with this, as the making of the church an engine, or even an ally, of the state; converting it into the means of strengthening or diffusing influence; or regarding it as a support of regal, in opposition to popular forms of government; *have served only to debase the institution, and to introduce into it numerous corruptions and abuses.*"² This is undoubtedly true. Now we affirm that this "debasement of the institution," this "introduction of numerous corruptions and abuses," is *absolutely inseparable* from religious establishments as they ordinarily exist; that wherever and whenever a state *so* prefers and patronises a particular church, these debasements and abuses and corruptions will inevitably arise.

"An engine or ally of the state." How will you frame—I will not say *any* religious establishment, but—any religious establishment that approaches to the ordinary character, without making it an engine or ally of the state? Alliance is involved in the very idea of the institution. The state selects, and prefers, and grants privileges to, a particular church. The continuance of these privileges depends upon the continuance of the state in its present principles. If the state is altered, the privileges are endangered or may be swept away. The privileged church therefore is interested in supporting the state, in standing by it against opposition; or which is the same thing, that church becomes an *ally* of the state. You cannot separate the effect from the cause. Wherever the state prefers and patronises one church there will be an *alliance* between the state and that church. There may be variations in the strength of this alliance. The less the patronage of the state, the less strong the alliance will be. Or there may be emergencies in which the alliance is suspended by the influence of stronger interests; but still the alliance, as a general consequence of the preference of the state, will inevitably subsist. When therefore Dr. Paley says that to make an establishment an ally of the state is to introduce into it numerous corruptions and abuses,

¹ In the preceding discussion I have left out all reference to the proper qualification or appointment of christian ministers, and have assumed (but without conceding) that the magistrate is at liberty to adjust those matters if he pleases.

² Paley: Mor. and Pol. Phil. b. 6, c. 10.

he in fact says that to make an establishment *at all* is to introduce into a church numerous corruptions and abuses.

It matters nothing what the doctrines or constitution of the church may be. The only point is, the alliance, and its degree. It may be episcopal, or presbyterian, or independent; but wherever the degree of alliance,—that is of preference and patronage is great,—there the abuses and corruptions will be great. In this country during a part of the seventeenth century independency became, in effect, the established church. It became of course an ally of the state; and fought from its pulpits the battles of the state. Nor will any one I suppose deny that this alliance made independency worse than it was before;—that it “introduced into it” “corruptions and abuses.”

The less strict the alliance, the fewer the corruptions that spring from an alliance. One state may impose a test to distinguish the ministers of the preferred church, and leave the selection to the church itself: another may actually appoint some or all of the ministers. These differences in the closeness of the alliance will produce differences in the degree of corruption; but alliance and corruption in both cases there will be. He who receives a legal provision from the minister of the day, will lend his support to the minister of the day. He who receives it by the operation of a general law, will lend his support to that political system which is likely to perpetuate that law.

“The means of strengthening or diffusing influence.” This abuse of religious establishments is presupposed in the question of alliance. It is by the means of influence that the alliance is produced. There may be and there are gradations in the directness or flagrancy of the exercise of influence, but influence of some kind is inseparable from the selection and preference of a particular church.

“A support of regal in opposition to popular forms of government.” This attendant upon religious establishments is accidental. An establishment will support that form, whatever it be, by which it is itself supported. In one country it may be the ally of republicanism, in another of aristocracy, and in another of monarchy; but in all it will be the ally of its own patron. The establishment of France supported the despotism of the Louises. The establishment of Spain supports at this hour (1830) the pitiable policy of Ferdinand. So accurately is alliance maintained, that in a mixed government it will be found that an establishment adheres to *that* branch of the government by which its own pre-eminence is most supported. In England the strictest alliance is between the church and the executive; and accordingly, in ruptures between the executive and legislative powers, the establishment has adhered to the former. There was an exception in the reign of James II.: but it was an exception which confirms the rule; for the establishment then found or feared that its alliance with the regal power *was about to be broken*.

Seeing then that the debasement of a christian church,—that the introduction into it of corruptions and abuses is inseparable from religious establishments, what is this debasement and what are these abuses and corruptions?

Now, without entering into minute inquiry, many evils arise obviously from the nature of the case. Here is an introduction, into the office of the christian ministry, of motives, and interests, and aims, foreign to the proper business of the office; and not only foreign but incongruous and discordant with it. Here are secular interests mixed up with the motives of religion. Here are temptations to assume the ministerial function in the church that is *established*, for the sake of its secular advantages. Here are inducements, when the function is assumed, to accommodate the manner of its exercise to the inclinations of the state; to suppress, for example, some religious principles which the civil power does not wish to see inculcated; to insist for the same reason with undue emphasis upon others; in a word, to adjust the religious conduct so as to strengthen or perpetuate the alliance with the state. It is very easy to perceive that these temptations will and must frequently prevail; and wherever they do prevail, there the excellence and dignity of the christian ministry are diminished, are depressed: there christianity is not exemplified in its purity; there it is shorn of a portion of its beams. The extent of the evil will depend of course upon the vigour of the cause; that is to say, the evil will be proportionate to the alliance. If a religious establishment were erected in which the executive power of the country appointed all its ministers, there would, I doubt not, ensue an almost universal corruption of the ministry. As an establishment recedes in its constitution from this closeness of alliance, a corresponding increase of purity may be expected.

During the reformation and in Queen Elizabeth's time, “of nine thousand four hundred beneficed clergy,” (adherents to Papacy) “only one hundred and seventy-seven resigned their pre-ferment rather than acknowledge the queen's supremacy,”¹ yet the pope to them was head of the church. One particular manner in which the establishment of a church injures the character of the church itself is, by the temptation which it holds out to equivocation or hypocrisy. It is necessary to the preference of the teachers of a particular sect, that there should be some means of discovering who belong to that sect:—there must be some test. Before the man who is desirous of undertaking the ministerial office, there are placed two roads, one of which conducts to those privileges which a state religion enjoys, and the other does not. The latter may be entered by all who will: the former by those only who affirm their belief of the rectitude of some church forms or of some points of theology. It requires no argument to prove that this is to *tempt* men to affirm that which they do not believe; that it is to say to the man who does not believe the stipulated

¹ Southey: Book of the Church, Sir Thomas More.

points, Here is money for you if you will violate your conscience. By some the invitation will be accepted;¹ and what is the result? Why that, just as they are going publicly to insist upon the purity and sanctity of the moral law, they violate that law themselves. The injury which is thus done to a christian church by *establishing* it, is negative as well as positive. You not only tempt some men to equivocation or hypocrisy, but exclude from the office others of sounder integrity. Two persons, both of whom do not assent to the prescribed points, are desirous of entering the church. One is upright and conscientious, the other subservient and unscrupulous. An establishment excludes the good man and admits the bad. "Though some purposes of order and tranquillity may be answered by the establishment of creeds and confessions, yet they are at all times attended with serious inconveniences: they check inquiry; they violate liberty; they ensnare the consciences of the clergy, by holding out temptations to prevarication."²

And with respect to the habitual accommodation of the exercise of the ministry to the desires of the state, it is manifest that an enlightened and faithful minister may frequently find himself restrained by a species of political leading strings. He has not the full command of his intellectual and religious attainments. He may not perhaps communicate the whole counsel of God.³ It was formerly *conceded* to the English clergy that they might preach against the horrors and impolicy of war, *provided* they were not chaplains to regiments or in the navy. *Conceded!* Then if the state had pleased, it might have withheld the concession; and accordingly from some the state did withhold it. They were prohibited to preach against that against which apostles wrote! What would these apostles have said if a state had bidden them keep silence respecting the most unchristian custom in the world? They would have said, Whether we ought to obey God rather than man, judge ye. What would they have *done*? They would have gone away and preached against it as before. One question more should be asked,—What would they have said to an alliance which thus brought the christian ministry under bondage to the state?

The next point of view in which a religious establishment is injurious to the church itself is, that it perpetuates any evils which happen to exist in it. The reason is this: the preference which a state gives to a particular church is given to it *as it is*. If the church makes alterations in its constitution, its discipline, or its forms, it cannot tell whether the state would continue to prefer and to patronise it. Besides, if alterations are begun, its

¹ "Chillingworth declared in a letter to Dr. Sheldon, that if he subscribed he subscribed his own damnation, and yet in no long space of time, he actually did subscribe to the articles of the church, again and again." Simpson's Plea.

² Paley: Moral and Political Philosophy, b. 6, c. 10.

³ "Honest and disinterested boldness in the path of duty is one of the first requisites of a minister of the gospel." Gisborne. But how shall they be thus *disinterested*? Mem. in the MS.

members do not know whether the alacrity of some other church might not take advantage of the loosening alliance with the state, to supplant it. In short, they do not know what would be the consequences of amendments nor where they would end. Conscious that the church *as it is* possesses the supremacy, they think it more prudent to retain that supremacy with existing evils than to endanger it by attempting to reform them. Thus it is that whilst *unestablished* churches alter their discipline or constitution as need appears to require, established churches remain century after century the same.¹ Not to be free to alter, can only *then* be right when the church is at present as perfect as it can be; and no one perhaps will gravely say that there is any established church on the globe which needs no amendment. Dr. Hartley devoted a portion of his celebrated work to a discussion of the probability that all the existing church establishments in the world would be dissolved; and he finds this probability expressly upon the ground that they need so much reformation.

"In all exclusive establishments, where temporal emoluments are annexed to the profession of a certain system of doctrines, and the usage of a certain routine of forms, and appropriated to an order of men so and so qualified, that order of men will naturally think themselves *interested* that things should continue as they are. A reformation might endanger their emoluments."² This is the testimony of a dignitary of one of these establishments. And the fact being admitted, what is the amount of the evil which it involves? Let another dignitary reply: "He who, by a diligent and faithful examination of the original records, dismisses from the system *one article* which contradicts the apprehension, the experience, or the reasoning of mankind, does more towards recommending the belief, and with the belief the influence of christianity, to the understandings and consciences of serious inquirers, and through them to universal reception and authority, than can be effected by a thousand contenders for creeds and ordinances of human establishments." If the benefits of dismissing such an article are so great, what must be the evil of continuing it? If the benefit of dismissing *one* such article be so great, what must be the evil of an established system which tends habitually and constantly to retain *many* of them? Yet these "articles, which thus contradict the reasoning of mankind," are actually retained by established churches. "Creeds and confessions," says Dr. Paley, "however they may express the persuasion or be accommodated to the controversies or to the fears of the age in which they are composed, in process of time, and by reason of the changes which are wont to take place in the judgment of mankind upon religious subjects, they come at length to contradict the *actual opinions* of the church whose doctrines they

¹ It was not to religious establishments that Protestants were indebted for the first efforts of reformation. They have uniformly resisted reformation. Mem. in the MS.

² Archdeacon Blackburn's Confessional: Pref.

profess to contain."¹ It is then *confessed* by the members of an established church that religious establishments powerfully obstruct the belief, the influence, the universal reception and authority of christianity. Great, indeed, must be the counter advantages of these establishments if they counterbalance *this* portion of its evils.

II. This last paragraph anticipates the second class of disadvantages attendant upon religious establishments: *their ill effects upon religion generally*. It is indisputable, that much of the irreligion of the world has resulted from those things which have been mixed up with christianity and placed before mankind as parts of religion. In some countries, the mixture has been so flagrant that the majority of the thinking part of the population have almost rejected religion altogether. So it was, and so it may be feared it still is, in France. The intellectual part of her people rejected religion, not because they had examined christianity and were convinced that it was a fiction, but because they had examined what was proposed to them as christianity and found it was absurd or false. So numerous were "the articles that contradicted the experience and judgment of mankind," that they concluded the whole was a fable, and rejected the whole.

Now that which the French church establishment did in an extreme degree, others do in a less degree. If the French church retained a hundred articles that contradicted the judgment of mankind, and thus made a nation of unbelievers, the church which retains ten or five such articles, *weakens* the general influence of religion although it may not destroy it.

Nor is it merely by unauthorized doctrinal articles or forms that the influence of religion is impaired, but by the general evils which affect the church itself. It is sufficiently manifest, that whatever tends to diminish the virtue or to impeach the character of the ministers of religion, must tend to diminish the influence of religion upon mankind. If the teacher is not good, we are not to expect goodness in the taught. If a man enters the church with impure or unworthy motives, he cannot do his duty when he is there. If he makes religion subservient to interest in his own practice, he cannot effectually teach others to make religion paramount to all. Men associate (they ought to do it less) the idea of religion with that of its teachers; and their respect for the one is frequently measured by their respect for the other. Now that the effect of religious establishments has been to depress their teachers in the estimation of mankind, cannot be disputed. The effect is, in truth, inevitable. And it is manifest, that whatever conveys disrespectful ideas of religion, diminishes its influence upon the human mind.—In brief, we have seen that to establish a religion is morally pernicious to its ministers; and whatever is injurious to them, diminishes the power of religion in the world.

Christianity is a religion of good-will and kind affections. Its

¹ Paley: Moral and Political Philosophy, b. 6, c. 10.

essence, so far as the intercourse of society is concerned, is Love. Whatever diminishes good-will and kind affections amongst christians, attacks the essence of christianity. Now religious establishments do this. They generate ill-will, heart-burnings, animosities,—those very things which our religion deprecates more almost than any other. It is obvious that if a fourth or a third of a community think they are unreasonably excluded from privileges which the other parts enjoy, feelings of jealousy or envy are likely to be generated.¹ If the minority are obliged to pay to the support of a religion they disapprove, these feelings are likely to be exacerbated. They soon become reciprocal: attacks are made by one party and repelled by another, till there arises an habitual sense of unkindness or ill-will. I once met with rather a grotesque definition of religious dissent, but it illustrates our proposition:—"Dissenterism,—that is, systematic opposition to the established religion."—The deduction from the practical influence of religion upon the minds of men which this effect of religious establishments occasions, is great.—The evil I trust is diminishing in the world; but then the diminution results, not from religious establishments, but from that power of christianity which prevails against these evils.

From these and from other evidences of the injurious effects of religious establishments upon the religious condition of mankind, we shall perhaps be prepared to assent to the observations which follow: "The history of the last eighteen centuries does, indeed, afford, in various ways, a strong presumptive evidence, that the cause of true christianity has very materially suffered in the world, in consequence of the connexion between the church and the state. It is probably in great measure the consequence of such an union that the church has assumed, in almost all christian countries, so secular a character—that christianity has become so lamentably mixed up with the spirit, maxims, motives, and politics, of a vain and evil world. Had the union in question never been attempted, pure religion might probably have found a freer course; the practical effects of christianity might have been more unmixed, and more extensive; and it might have spread its influence in a much more efficient manner than is now the case, even over the laws and politics of kings and nations. Before its union with the state, our holy religion flourished with comparative incorruptness; afterwards it gradually declined in its purity and its

¹ "The placing all the religious sects (in America) upon an equal footing with respect to the government of the country, has effectually secured the peace of the community, at the same time that it has essentially promoted the interests of truth and virtue." Mem. Dr. Priestly, page 175. Mem. in the MS.

Pennsylvania,—"Although there are so many sects and such a difference of religious opinions in this province, it is surprising the harmony which subsists among them, they consider themselves as children of the same father, and live like brethren, because they have the liberty of thinking like men; to this pleasing harmony in a great measure is to be attributed the rapid and flourishing state of Pennsylvania above all the other provinces." Travels through the Interior Parts of North America, by an Officer. 1791. Lond. The Officer was Thomas Aubrey, who was taken prisoner by the Americans. Mem. in the MS.

power, until all was nearly lost in darkness, superstition, and spiritual tyranny.¹ "Religion should remain distinct from the political constitution of a state. Intermingled with it what purpose can it serve, except the baneful purpose of communicating and of receiving contamination."²

III. Then as to the effect of religious establishments upon the civil welfare of the state,—we know that the connexion between religious and civil welfare is intimate and great. Whatever therefore diminishes the influence of religion upon a people, diminishes their general welfare. In addition however to this general consideration, there are some particular modes, of the injurious effect of religious establishments, which it may be proper to notice.

And first, religious establishments are incompatible with complete religious liberty. This consideration we requested the reader to bear in mind when the question of religious liberty was discussed.³ "If an establishment be right, religious liberty is not; and if religious liberty be right, an establishment is not." Whatever arguments therefore exist to prove the rectitude of complete religious liberty, they prove at the same time the wrongness of religious establishments. Nor is this all: for it is the manifest tendency of these establishments to withhold an increase of religious liberty, even when on other grounds it would be granted. The secular interests of the state religion are set in array against an increase of liberty. If the established church allows other churches to approach more nearly to an equality with itself, its own relative eminence is diminished; and if by any means the state religion adds to its own privileges, it is by deducting from the privileges of the rest. The state religion is besides afraid to dismiss any part even of its confessedly useless privileges, lest when an alteration is begun, it should not easily be stopped. And there is no reason to doubt that it is temporal rather than religious considerations,—interest rather than christianity, which now occasions restrictions and disabilities and tests.

In conformity with these views, persecution has generally been the work of religious establishments. Indeed some alliance or some countenance at least from the state is necessary to a systematic persecution. Popular outrage may persecute men on account of their religion, as it often has done; but fixed stated persecutions, have perhaps always been the work of the religion of the state. It was the state religion of Rome that persecuted the first christians.—"Who was it that crucified the Saviour of the world for attempting to reform the religion of his country? The Jewish priesthood.—Who was it that drowned the altars of their idols with the blood of christians for attempting to abolish paganism? The Pagan priesthood.—Who was it that persecuted to flames and death those who in the time of Wickliffe and his followers laboured to reform the errors of Popery? The Popish

¹ J. J. Gurney: *Peculiarities*, c. 7.

² Charles James Fox: *Fell's Life*.

³ See *Essays on the Principles of Morality*, &c. vol. 2. c. 4.

priesthood.—Who was it and who is it that both in England and in Ireland since the reformation—but I check my hand, being unwilling to reflect upon the dead or to exasperate the living."¹ We also are unwilling to reflect upon or to exasperate, but our business is with plain truth. Who then was it that since the reformation has persecuted dissenters from its creed, and who is it that at this hour thinks and speaks of them with unchristian antipathy? *The English Priesthood*. Not to mention that it was the state religion of Judea that put our Saviour himself to death. It was and it is the state religion in some European countries that now persecutes dissenters from its creed. It was the state religion in this country that persecuted the protestants; and since protestantism has been established, it is the state religion which has persecuted protestant dissenters. Is this the fault principally of the faith of these churches or of their alliance with the state? No man can be in doubt for an answer.

We are accustomed to attribute too much to bigotry. Bigotry has been very great and very operative; but bigotry alone would not have produced the disgraceful and dreadful transactions which fill the records of ecclesiastical history. No. Men have often been actuated by the love of supremacy or of money, whilst they were talking loudly of the sacredness of their faith. They have been less afraid for religion than for the dominance of a church. When the creed of that church was impugned, those who shared in its advantages were zealous to suppress the rising inquiry; because the discredit of the creed might endanger the loss of the advantages. The zeal of a pope for the real presence, was often quite a fiction. He and his cardinals cared perhaps nothing for the real presence, as they sometimes cared nothing for morality. But men might be immoral without encroaching upon the papal power:—they could not deny the doctrine, without endangering its overthrow.

Happily, persecution for religion is greatly diminished: yet whilst we rejoice in the fact we cannot conceal from ourselves the consideration, that the diminution of persecution has resulted rather from the general diffusion of better principles, than from the operation of religious establishments as such.

In most or in all ages, a great portion of the flagitious transactions which furnish materials for the ecclesiastical historian, have resulted from the political connections or interests of a church. It was not the interest of christianity but of an establishment, which made Becket embroil his king and other sovereigns in distractions. It was not the interests of christianity but of an establishment which occasioned the monstrous impositions and usurpations of the papal see. And I do not know whether there has ever been a religious war of which religion was the only or the principal cause. Besides all this, there has been an inextricable succession of intrigues and cabals,—of conflicting interests,—and

¹ *Miscellaneous Tracts*, by Richard Watson, D. D. Bishop of Landaff, v. 2.

clamour and distraction, which the world would have been spared if secular interests had not been brought into connection with religion.

Another mode in which religious establishments are injurious to the civil welfare of a people, is by their tendency to resist political improvements. That same cause which induces state religions to maintain themselves *as they are*, induces them to maintain the patron state *as it is*. It is the state in its present condition that secures to the church its advantages; and the church does not know whether, if it were to encourage political reformation, the new state of things might not endanger its own supremacy. There are indeed so many other interests and powers concerned in political reformations, that the state religion cannot always prevent alterations from being effected. Nor would I affirm that they always endeavour to prevent it. And yet we may appeal to the general experience of all ages, whether established churches have not resisted reformation in those political institutions upon which their own privileges depended. Now these are serious things. For after all that can be said and justly said of the mischiefs of political changes and the extravagancies of political empiricism, it is sufficiently certain that almost every government that has been established in the world, has *needed* from time to time important reformations in its constitution or its practice. And it is equally certain, that if there be any influence or power which habitually and with little discrimination supports political institutions as they are, that influence or power must be very pernicious to the world.

We have seen that one of the requisites of a religious establishment is a "legal provision" for its ministers,—that is to say, the members of all the churches which exist in a state must be obliged to pay to the support of one whether they approve of that one or not.

Now in endeavouring to estimate the effects of this system, with a view to ascertain the preponderance of public advantages, we are presented at the outset with the inquiry,—Is this compulsory maintenance *right*? Is it compatible with christianity? If it is not, there is an end of the controversy; for it is nothing to christians whether a system be politic or impolitic, if once they have discovered that it is wrong. But I wave for the present the question of rectitude. The reader is at liberty to assume that christianity allows governments to make this compulsory provision if they think fit. I wave too the question whether a christian minister *ought* to receive payment for his labours, whether that payment be voluntary or not.

The single point before us is then, the balance of advantages. Is it more advantageous that ministers should be paid by a legal provision or by voluntary subscription?

That advantage of a legal provision which consists in the supply of a teacher to every district has already been noticed; so

that our inquiry is reduced to a narrow limit. Supposing that a minister would be appointed in every district although the state did not pay him, is it more desirable that he should be paid by the state or voluntarily by the people?

Of the legal provision some of the advantages are these: it holds out no inducement to the irreligious or indifferent to absent themselves from public worship lest they should be expected to pay the preacher. Public worship is conducted,—the preacher delivers his discourse, whether such persons go or not. They pay no more for going, and no less for staying away; and it is probable, in the present religious state of mankind, that some go to places for worship since it costs them nothing, who otherwise would stay away. But it is manifestly better that men should attend even in such a state of indifference than that they should not attend at all. Upon the voluntary system of payment, this good effect is not so fully secured; for though the doors of chapels be open to all, yet few persons of competent means would attend them constantly without feeling that they might be expected to contribute to the expenses. I do not believe that the non-attendance of indifferent persons would be greatly increased by the adoption of the voluntary system, especially if the payments were as moderate as they easily might be;—but it is a question rather of speculation than of experience, and the reader is to give upon this account to the system of legal provision, such an amount of advantage as he shall think fit.

Again.—Preaching where there is a legal provision is not "a mode of begging." If you adopt voluntary payment, that payment depends upon the good pleasure of the hearers, and there is manifestly a temptation upon the preacher to accommodate his discourses, or the manner of them, to the wishes of his hearers rather than to the dictates of his own judgment. But the man who receives his stipend whether his hearers be pleased or not, is under no such temptation. He is at liberty to conform the exercise of his functions to his judgment without the diminution of a subscription. This I think is an undeniable advantage.

Another consideration is this:—That where there is a religious establishment with a legal provision, it is usual, not to say indispensable, to fill the pulpits only with persons who entertain a certain set of religious opinions. It would be obviously idle to assume that these opinions are true, but they are, or are in a considerable degree, *uniform*. Assuming then that one set of opinions is as sound as another, is it better that a district should always hear one set, or that the teachers of twenty different sets should successively gain possession of the pulpit, as the choice of the people might direct? I presume not to determine such a question; but it may be observed that in point of fact those churches which do proceed upon the voluntary system, are not often subjected to such fluctuations of doctrine. There does not appear much difficulty in constituting churches upon the voluntary

plan, which shall in practice secure considerable uniformity in the sentiments of the teachers. And as to the bitter animosities and distractions which have been predicted if a choice of new teachers were to be left to the people,—they do not I believe ordinarily follow. Not that I apprehend the ministers, for instance, of an independent church, are always elected with that unanimity and freedom from heart-burnings which ought to subsist, but that animosities do not subsist to any great extent. Besides, the prediction appears to be founded on the supposition, that a certain stipend was to be appropriated to one teacher or to another according as he might obtain the greater number of votes,—whereas every man is at liberty if he pleases to withdraw his contribution from him whom he disapproves, and to give it to another. And after all, there may be voluntary support of ministers without an election by those who contribute, as is instanced by the Methodists in the present day.

On the other hand there are some advantages attendant on the voluntary system which that of a legal provision does not possess.

And first it appears to be of importance that there should be an union, an harmony, a cordiality between the minister and the people. It is in truth an indispensable requisite. Christianity which is a religion of love, cannot flourish where unkindly feelings prevail. Now I think it is manifest that harmony and cordiality are likely to prevail more where the minister is chosen and voluntarily remunerated by his hearers, than where they are not consulted in the choice; where they are obliged to take him whom others please to appoint, and where they are compelled to pay him whether they like him or not. The *tendency* of this last system is evidently opposed to perfect kindness and cordiality. There is likely to be a sort of natural connection, a communication of good offices induced between hearers and the man whom they themselves choose and voluntarily remunerate, which is less likely in the other case. If love be of so much consequence generally to the christian character, it is especially of consequence that it should subsist between him who assumes to be a dispenser and them who are in the relation of hearers of the gospel of Christ.

Indeed the very circumstance that a man is compelled to pay a preacher, tends to the introduction of unkind and unfriendly feelings. It is not to be expected that men will pay him more graciously or with a better will than they pay a tax-gatherer; and we all know that the tax-gatherer is one of the last persons whom men wish to see. He who desires to extend the *influence* of christianity would be very cautious of establishing a system of which so ungracious a regulation formed a part. There is truth worthy of grave attention in the ludicrous verse of Cowper's—

A rarer man than you
In pulpit none shall hear;
But yet, methinks, to tell you true,
You sell it plaguy dear.

It is easy to perceive that the influence of *that* man's exhortations must be diminished, whose hearers listen with the reflection that his advice is "plaguy dear." The reflection too is perfectly natural, and cannot be helped. And when superadded to this is the consideration, that it is not only sold "dear" but that payment is *enforced*,—material injury must be sustained by the cause of religion. In this view it may be remarked, that the support of an establishment by a general tax would be preferable to the payment of each pastor by his own hearers. Nor is it unworthy of notice that some persons will always think (whether with reason or without it) that compulsory maintenance is not *right*; and in whatever degree they do this, there is an increased cause of dissatisfaction or estrangement.

Again.—The teacher who is *independent* of the congregation,—who will enjoy all his emoluments whether they are satisfied with him or not,—is under manifest temptation to remissness in his duty,—not perhaps to remissness in those particulars on which his superiors would animadvert, but in those which respect the unstipulated and undefinable but very important duties of private care and of private labours. To mention this is sufficient. No man who reflects upon the human constitution, or who looks around him, will need arguments to prove, that *they* are likely to labour negligently whose profits are not increased by assiduity and zeal. I know that the power of religion can, and that it often does, counteract this; but that is no argument for putting temptation in the way. So powerful indeed is this temptation that with a very great number it is acknowledged to prevail. Even if we do not assert with a clergyman that a great proportion of his brethren labour only so much for the religious benefit of their parishioners as will screen them from the arm of the law, there is other evidence which is unhappily conclusive. The desperate extent to which non-residence is practised, is infallible proof that a large proportion of the clergy are remiss in the discharge of the duties of a christian pastor. They do not discharge them *con amore*. And how should they? It was not the wish to do this which prompted them to become clergymen at first. They were influenced by another object, and that they have obtained—they possess an income: and it is not to be expected that when this is obtained the mental desires should suddenly become elevated and purified, and that they who entered the church for the sake of its emoluments should commonly labour in it for the sake of religion.

Although to many the motive for entering the church is the same as that for engaging in other professions, it is an unhappiness peculiar to the clerical profession that it does not offer the same stimulus to subsequent exertion,—that advancement does not usually depend upon desert. The man who seeks for an income from surgery or the bar is continually prompted to pay exemplary attention to its duties. Unless the surgeon is skilful

and attentive, he knows that practice is not to be expected: unless the pleader devotes himself to statutes and reports, he knows that he is not to expect cases and briefs. But the clergyman, whether he study the bible or not, whether he be diligent and zealous or not, still possesses his living. Nor would it be rational to expect, that where the ordinary stimulus to human exertion is wanting, the exertion itself should generally be found. So naturally does exertion follow from stimulus, that we believe it is an observation frequently made, that curates are more exemplary than beneficed clergymen. And if beneficed clergymen were more solicitous than they are to make the *diligence* of their curates the principal consideration in employing them, this difference between curates and their employers would be much greater than it is. Let beneficed clergymen employ and reward curates upon as simple principles as those are on which a merchant employs and rewards a clerk, and it is probable that nine-tenths of the parishes in England would wish for a curate rather than a rector.

But this very consideration affords a powerful argument against the present system. If much good would result from making clerical reward the price of desert, much evil results from making it independent of desert. This effect of the English establishment is not like some others, inseparable from the institution. It would doubtless be possible even with compulsory maintenance so to appropriate it that it should form a constant motive to assiduity and exertion. Clergymen *might* be elevated in their profession according to their fidelity to their office; and if this were done, if as opportunity offered, all were likely to be promoted who deserved it; and if all who did not deserve it were sure to be passed by, a new face would soon be put upon the affairs of the church. The complaints of neglect of duty would quickly be diminished, and non-residence would soon cease to be the reproach of three thousand out of ten. We cannot however amuse ourselves with the hope that this will be done;—because in reference to the civil constitution of the church, there is too near an approach to that condition in which the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

If then it be asserted that it is one great advantage of the establishment, that it provides a teacher for every parish, it is one great disadvantage that it makes a large proportion of those teachers negligent of their duty.

There may perhaps be a religious establishment in which the ministers shall be selected for their *deserts*, though I know not whether in any it is actually and sufficiently done. That it is one of the first requisites in the appointment of religious teachers is plain; and this point is manifestly better consulted by a system in which the people voluntarily pay and choose their pastors, than when they do not. Men love goodness in others, though they may be bad themselves; and they especially like it in their religious teachers: so that when they come to select a person to fill that

office, they are likely to select one of whom they think at least that he is a good man.

The same observation holds of non-residence. Non-residence is not *necessary* to a state religion. By the system of voluntary payment it is *impossible*.

It has sometimes been said (with whatever truth) that in times of public discontent these persons have been disposed to disaffection. If this be true, compulsory support is in this respect a political evil, in as much as it is the cause of the alienation of a part of the community. We will not suppose so strong a case as that this alienation might lead to physical opposition; but, supposing the dissatisfaction only to *exist* affords no inconsiderable topic of the statesman's inquiry. Happiness is the object of civil government, and this object is frustrated in part in respect of those who think themselves aggrieved by its policy. And when it is considered how numerous the dissenters are, and that they increase in number, the political impropriety and impolicy of keeping them in a state of dissatisfaction becomes increased.

The best security of a government is in the satisfaction and affection of the people; which satisfaction is always diminished and which affection is always endangered, in respect of those who, disapproving a certain church, are compelled to pay to its support. This is a consequence of a "legal provision" that demands much attention from the legislator. Every legislator knows that it is an evil. It is a point that no man disputes, and that every man knows should be prevented, unless its cause effects a counterbalance of advantages.

Lastly.—Upon the question of the comparative advantages of a legal provision and a voluntary remuneration in securing the due discharge of the ministerial function, what is the evidence of facts? Are the ministers of established or of unestablished churches the more zealous, the more exemplary, the more laborious, the more devoted? Whether of the two are the more beloved by their hearers? Whether of the two lead the more exemplary and religious lives? Whether of the two are the more active in works of philanthropy? It is a question of fact, and facts are before the world.

The discussions of the present chapter conduct the mind of the writer to these short conclusions:—

That of the two grounds upon which the propriety of Religious Establishments is capable of examination, neither affords evidence in their favour: That Religious Establishments derive no countenance from the nature of christianity or from the example of the primitive churches: and, That they are not recommended by practical Utility.

SECTION II.

THE RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENT OF ENGLAND AND IRELAND.

If the conclusions of the last chapter be just, it will now become our business to inquire how far the disadvantages which are incidental to religious establishments actually operate in our own, and whether there subsist any additional disadvantages resulting from the peculiar constitution or circumstances of the English church.

We have no concern with religious opinions or forms of church government, but *with the church as connected with the state*. It is not with an episcopal church but with an established church that we are concerned. If there must exist a religious establishment, let it by all means remain in its present hands. The experience which England has had of the elevation of another sect to the supremacy, is not such as to make us wish to see another elevated again.¹ Nor would any sect which takes a just view of its own religious interests desire the supremacy for itself.

The *origin* of the English establishment is papal. The political alliance of the church is similar now to what it was in the first years of Henry VIII. When Henry countenanced the preachers of the reformed opinions, when he presented some of them with the benefices which had hitherto been possessed by the Romish clergy, and when at length these benefices and the other privileges of the state religion were bestowed upon the "reformed" only,—no essential change was effected in the political constitution of the church. In one point indeed the alliance with the state was made more strict, because the supremacy was transferred from the pope to the monarch. So that the same or a kindred political character was put in connexion with other men and new opinions. The church was altered but the establishment remained nearly the

¹ The religious sect who are now commonly called Puritans, "prohibited the use of the Common Prayer, not merely in churches, chapels, and places of public worship, but in any private place or family as well, under a penalty of five pounds for the first offence, ten pounds for the second, and for the third a year's imprisonment." * These men did not understand or did not practise the fundamental duties of toleration. For religious liberty they had still less regard. "They passed an ordinance by which eight heresies were made punishable with death upon the first offence, unless the offender abjured his errors, and irreversibly if he relapsed. Sixteen other opinions were to be punished with imprisonment till the offender should find sureties that he would maintain them no more." † And they quite abolished the Episcopal rank and order. As if each church might not decide for itself by what form its discipline should be conducted! To have separated the civil privileges from the episcopal order was within the province of the legislature,—and to have abolished those privileges would we think have been wise.

* Southey's Book of the Church. † Ibid.

same: or the difference that did obtain made the establishment more of a state religion than before. The origin therefore of the English establishment is papal. It was planted by papal policy, and nurtured by pervading superstition: and as to the transfer of the supremacy, but little credit is due to its origin or its motives. No reverence is due to our establishment on account of its parentage. The *church* is the offspring of the reformation,—the church *establishment* is not. It is not a daughter of protestantism but of the papacy,—brought into unnatural alliance with a better faith. Unhappily, but little anxiety was shown by some of the reformers to purify the political character of the church when its privileges came into their own hands. They declaimed against the corruptions of the former church, but were more than sufficiently willing to retain its profits and its power.

The *alliance* with the state of which we have spoken, as the inseparable attendant of religious establishments, is in this country peculiarly close. "Church and State" is a phrase that is continually employed, and indicates the intimacy of the connexion between them. The question then arises, whether those disadvantages which result generally from the alliance, result in this country, and whether the peculiar intimacy is attended with peculiar evils.

Bishops are virtually appointed by the prince; and it is manifest that in the present principles of political affairs, regard will be had, in their selection, to the interests of the state. The question will not always be, when a bishopric becomes vacant, Who is the fittest man to take the oversight of the church? but sometimes,—What appointment will most effectually strengthen the administration of the day?—Bishops are temporal peers, and as such they have an efficient ability to promote the views of the government by their votes in parliament. Bishops in their turn are patrons; and it becomes also manifest that these appointments will sometimes be regulated by kindred views. He who was selected by the cabinet because he would promote their measures, and who cannot hope for advancement if he opposes those measures, is not likely to select clergymen who oppose them. Many ecclesiastical appointments, again, are in the hands of the individual officers of government,—of the prime minister for example, or the lord chancellor. That these officers will frequently regard political purposes, or purposes foreign to the *worth* of men in making these appointments, is plain. Now when we reflect that the *highest* dignities of the church are in the patronage of the king, and that the influence of their dignitaries upon the inferior clergy is necessarily great, it becomes obvious, that there will be diffused through the general whole of the hierarchy, a systematic alliance with the ruling power. Nor is it assuming any thing unreasonable to add, that whilst the ordinary principles

that actuate mankind operate, the hierarchy will sometimes postpone the interests of religion to their own.

Upon the practical authority of cabinets over the church Bishop Warburton makes himself somewhat mirthful:—"The rabbins make the giant Gog or Magog contemporary with Noah, and convinced by his preaching. So that he was disposed to take the benefit of the ark. But here lay the distress—it by no means suited his dimensions. Therefore, as he could not enter in, he contented himself to ride upon it astride. Image now to yourself this illustrious cavalier mounted on his *hackney*, and see if he does not bring before you the church, bestrid by some lumpish minister of state, who turns and winds it at his pleasure. The only difference is, that Gog *believed* the preacher of righteousness and religion."¹

If then, to convert a religious establishment into "a means of strengthening or diffusing influence, serves only to debase it, and to introduce into it numerous corruptions and abuses," these basements, corruptions, and abuses must necessarily subsist in the establishment of England.

And first as to the church itself.—It is not too much to believe that the honourable earnestness of many of the reformers to purify religion from the corruptions of the papacy, was cooled, and eventually almost destroyed by the acquisition of temporal immunities. When they had acquired them the unhappy reasoning began to operate,—*Let us let well alone: if we encourage further changes our advantages will perhaps pass into other hands. We are safe as we are; and we will not endanger the loss of present benefits by further reformation.*—What has been the result?—That the church has never been fully reformed to the present hour. If any reader is disposed to deny this, I place the proposition not upon my feeble authority but upon that of the members of the church and of the reformers themselves. The reader will be pleased to notice that there are few quotations in the present chapter except from members of the church of England.

"If any person will seriously consider the low and superstitious state of the minds of men in general in the time of James I. much more in the reigns of his predecessors, he will not be surprised to find that *there are various matters in our ecclesiastical constitution which require some alteration.* Our forefathers did great things, and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for their labours, but much more remains to be done."² Hartley says of the ecclesiastical powers of the christian world—"They have *all* left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are *all* merchants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp."³ Dr. Henry More (he was zealous for the honour of the church) says of the reformed

¹ Bishop Warburton's Letters to Bishop Hurd, Letter 47. ² Simpson's Plea, p. 137.
³ Essay on Man, 1749, v. 2, p. 370.

churches, they have "separated from the great Babylon, to build those that are lesser and more tolerable, but yet not to be tolerated for ever."¹

"It pleased God in his unsearchable wisdom to suffer the progress of this great work, the reformation, to be stopped in the *midway*, and the effects of it to be greatly weakened by many unhappy divisions among the reformed."²

"The innovations introduced into our religious establishment at the reformation, were great and glorious for those times: but *some further innovations are yet wanting* (would to God they may be quietly made!) to bring it to perfection."³

"I have always had a true zeal for the church of England,—yet I must say—*there are many things in it that have been very uneasy to me.*"⁴

"Cranmer, Bucer, Jewel, and others never considered the reformation which took place in their own times as complete."⁵

Long after Cranmer's days, some of the brightest ornaments of the church still thought a reformation was needed. Tillotson, Patrick, Tennison, Kidder, Stillingfleet, Burnet, and others,⁶ endeavoured a further reformation, though in vain.

"We have been contented to suffer our religious constitution, our doctrines, and ceremonies, and forms of public worship, to remain nearly in the same *unpurged, adulterated, and superstitious state* in which the original reformers left them."⁷

I attribute this want of reformation primarily to the political alliance of the church. Why should those who have the power refuse to effect it unless they feared some ill result? And what ill result could arise from religious reformation if it were not the endangering of temporal advantages?

"I would only ask," said Lord Bacon, two hundred years ago, "why the civil state should be purged and restored by good and wholesome laws, made every third or fourth year in parliament assembled, devising remedies as fast as time breedeth mischief; and *contrariwise*, the ecclesiastical state should still continue upon the dregs of time, and receive no alteration now for these five and forty years and more.—If St. John were to indite an epistle to the church of England as he did to them of Asia, it would sure have the clause *habeo adversus te pauca.*"⁸ What would Lord Bacon have said if he had lived to our day, when two hundred years more have passed, and the establishment still continues "upon the dregs of time!"—But Lord Bacon's question should be answered; and though no *reason* can be given for refusing to reform, a *cause* can be assigned.

¹ Myst. of Iniquity, p. 553. This poor man found that his language laboured under the imputation of being unclerical, unguarded and impolitic; and he afterwards showed solicitude to retract it. See p. 476, &c. of the same work.

² Dr. Lowth, afterwards Bishop of London: *Visitation Sermon*, 1758.

³ Dr. Watson, Bishop of Landaff: *Misc. Tracts*, v. 2, p. 17, &c.

⁴ Bishop Burnet: *Hist. Own Times*, v. 2, p. 634. ⁵ Simpson's Plea. ⁶ Ibid. ⁷ Ibid

⁸ Works: Edit. 1803, v. 2, p. 527.

"Whatever truth there may be in the proposition which asserts that the multitude is fond of innovation, I think that the proposition which asserts that *the priesthood is averse from reformation, is far more generally true.*"¹ This is the cause. They who have the power of reforming, are afraid to touch the fabric. They are afraid to remove one stone however decayed, lest another and another should be loosened, until the fabric, as a political institution, should fall. Let us hear again episcopal evidence. Bishop Porteus informs us that himself with some other clergymen, (amongst whom were Dr. Percy and Dr. Yorke, both subsequently bishops), attempted to induce the bishops to alter some things "which all reasonable persons agreed stood in need of amendment." The answer given by Archbishop Cornwallis was exactly to the purpose—"I have consulted, severally, my brethren the bishops; and it is the opinion of the bench in general that nothing can in prudence be done in the matter."² Here is no attempt to deny the existence of the evils,—no attempt to show that they ought not to be amended, but only that it would not "be prudent" to amend them. What were these considerations of prudence? Did they respect religion? Is it imprudent to purify religious offices? Or did they respect the temporal privileges of the church?—No man surely can doubt, that if the church had been a religious institution only, its heads would have thought it both prudent and right to amend it.

The matters to which Bishop Porteus called the attention of the bench were "the liturgy, but especially the articles." These Articles afford an extraordinary illustration of that tendency to resist improvement of which we speak.

"The requiring subscription to the thirty-nine articles is a great imposition."³ "Do the articles of the church of England want a revisal?—Undoubtedly."⁴—In 1772 a clerical petition was presented to the house of commons for relief upon the subject of subscription: and what were the sentiments of the house respecting the articles. One member said, "I am persuaded they are not warranted by scripture, and I am sure they cannot be reconciled to common sense."⁵ Another,—"They are contradictory, absurd, several of them damnable, not only in a religious and speculative light, but also in a moral and practical view."⁶ Another,—"The articles, I am sure, want a revisal; because several of them are heterodox and absurd, warranted neither by reason nor by scripture. Many of them seem calculated for keeping out of the church all but those who will subscribe any thing, and sacrifice every consideration to the mammon of unrighteousness."⁷ And a fourth said, "Some of them are in my opinion unfounded in, some of them inconsistent with, reason

¹ Bishop Watson: *Misc. Tracts*, v. 2.

² Works of Bishop Porteus, vol. 1.

³ Bishop Burnet: *Hist. Own Times*, v. 2, p. 634.

⁴ Bishop Watson: *Miscel. Tracts*, v. 2, p. 17.

⁵ Sir William Meredith.

⁶ Lord George Germain.

⁷ Lord John Cavendish.

and scripture; and some of them subversive of the very genius and design of the gospel."¹ The articles found, it appears, in the house of commons one, and one only defender; and that one was Sir Roger Newdigate, the member for Oxford.²—And thus a "Church of Christ" retains in its bosom that which is confessedly irrational, inconsistent with scripture, contradictory, absurd, subversive of the very genius and design of the gospel:—for what? Because the church is *allied to the state*:—because it is a Religious Establishment.

There is such an interest, an importance, an awfulness in these things, resulting both from their effects and the responsibility which they entail, that I would accumulate upon the general necessity for reformation some additional testimonies.

In 1746 was presented to the convocation, "Free and Candid Disquisitions by dutiful Sons of the Church," in which they say, "Our duty seems as clear as our obligations to it are cogent; and is, in one word, to *reform*." Of this book Archdeacon Blackburn tells us that it was treated with much "contempt and scorn by those who ought to have paid the greatest regard to the subject of it;" and that "it caused the *forms of the church* to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary where they have been found greatly wanting."³

"Our confirmations, and I may add even our ordinations for the sacred ministry, are dwindled into painful and disgusting ceremonies, as they are usually administered."⁴

Another Archdeacon, who was not only a friend of the church but a public advocate of religious establishments says, "Reflection, we hope, in some, and time we are sure in all, will reconcile men to alterations established in reason. If there be any danger it is *from some of the clergy*, who would *rather suffer the vineyard to be overgrown with weeds than stir the ground*; or what is worse, call these weeds the fairest flowers in the garden." This is strong language: that which succeeds is stronger still. "If we are to wait for improvement till the cool, the calm, the discreet part of mankind begin it; till *church governors* solicit, or *ministers of state* propose it, I will venture to pronounce that (without *His* interposition with whom nothing is impossible) we may remain as we are till the renovation of all things."⁵ Why "church governors" and "ministers of state" should be so peculiarly backward to improve, is easily known. Ministers of state are more anxious for the consolidation of their power than for the amendment of churches; and church governors are more anxious to benefit themselves by consolidating that power, than to

¹ Sir George Saville.

² Par. Hist. v. 17. The petition, after all this was rejected by two hundred and seventeen votes against seventy-one. Can any thing more clearly indicate the *fear* of reforming?—a fear that extends itself to the state, because the state thinks (with reason or wi' bout it) that to endanger the stability of the church were to endanger its own.

³ The Confessional.

⁴ Simpson's Plea.

⁵ A Defence of the Considerations on the propriety of requiring a subscription to Articles of Faith. By Dr. Paley, p. 35.

reform the system of which they are the heads. But let no man anticipate that we shall indeed remain as we are till the renovation of all things. The work will be done though these may refuse to do it. "If," says a statesman, "the friends of the church, instead of taking the lead in a mild reform of abuses, contend obstinately for their protection, and treat every man as an enemy who aims at reform, *they will certainly be overpowered at last, and the correction applied by those who will apply it with no sparing hand.*"¹ If these declarations be true (and who will even question their truth?) we may be allowed, without any pretensions to extraordinary sagacity, to add another: that to these unsparing correctors the work will assuredly be assigned. How infatuated then the policy of refusing reformation even if policy only were concerned!

The next point in which the effect of the state alliance is injurious to the church itself, is by its effects upon the ministry.

It is manifest that where there are such powerful motives of *interest* to assume the ministerial office, and where there are such facilities for the admission of unfit men,—unfit men will often be admitted. Human nature is very stationary; and kindred results arose very many centuries ago. "The attainments of the clergy in the first ages of the Anglo-Saxon church were very considerable. But a great and total degeneracy took place during the latter years of the Heptarchy, and for two generations after the union of its kingdoms." And why? Because "mere worldly views operated upon a great proportion of them; no other way of life offered so fair a prospect of power to the ambitious, of security to the prudent, of tranquillity and ease to the easy-minded."² Such views still operate, and they still produce kindred effects.

It is manifest, that if men undertake the office of christian teachers not from earnestness in the cause but from the desire of profit or power, or ease, the office will frequently be ill discharged. Persons who possess little of the christian minister but the name, will undertake to guide the flock; and hence it is inevitable that the ministry, as a body, will become reduced in the scale of religious excellence. So habitual is the system of undertaking the office *for the sake* of its emoluments, that men have begun to avow the motive and to defend it. "It is no reproach to the church to say that it is supplied with ministers by the emoluments it affords."³ Would it not have been a reproach to the first christian churches, or could it have been said of them at all? Does he who enters the church for the sake of its advantages, enter it "of a ready mind!"—But the more lucrative offices of the church are talked of with much familiarity as "prizes," much

¹ Letters on the subject of the British and Foreign Bible Society, by the present Lord Bexley.

² Southey: *Book of the Church*, c. 6.

³ Knox's Essays, No. 18.

in the same manner as we talk of prizes in a lottery. "The same fund produces more effect—when distributed into prizes of different value than when divided into equal shares."¹ This "effect" is described as being "both an allurement to *men of talents* to enter into the church, and as a stimulus to the *industry* of those who are already in it." But every man knows that talent and industry are not the only nor the chief things which obtain for a person the prizes of the church. There is more of accuracy in the parallel passage of another moralist. "The medical profession does not possess so many *splendid prizes* as the church and the bar, and *on that account*, perhaps, is rarely if ever pursued by young men of noble families."² Here is the point: it is rather to noble families than to talent and industry, that the prizes are awarded. "There are indeed rich preferments, but these, it is observed, do not usually fall to merit as the reward of it, but are lavished where interest and family connexion put in their irresistible claim."³ That plain speaking man Bishop Warburton writes to his friend Hurd, "Reckon upon it, that Durham goes to some *noble ecclesiastic*. 'Tis a morsel only for them."⁴ It is manifest that when this language can be appropriate, the office of the ministry must be dishonoured and abused. Respecting the priesthood it is acknowledged that "the characters of men are formed much more by the *temptations* than the duties of their profession."⁵ Since then the temptations are worldly, what is to be expected but that the character should be worldly too?—Nor would any thing be gained by the dexterous distinction that I have somewhere met with, that although the motive for "taking the oversight of the flock" be indeed "lucre," yet it does not come under the apostolical definition of "filthy."

Of the eventual consequences of thus introducing unqualified and perhaps irreligious nobles into the government of the church, Bishop Warburton speaks in strong language. "Our grandees have at last found their way back into the church. I only wonder they have been so long about it. But be assured, that nothing but a new religious revolution, to sweep away the fragments that Harry the VIII. left, after banqueting his courtiers, will drive them out again."⁶ When that revolution shall come which will sweep away these prizes, it will prove not only to these but to other things to be a besom of destruction.

If the fountain be bitter, the current cannot be sweet. The principles which too commonly operate upon the dignitaries of the church, descend in some degree to the inferior ranks. I say in some degree; for I do not believe that the degree is the same or so great. Nor is it to be expected. The temptation which forms the character, is diminished in its power, and the character therefore may rise.

¹ Mor. and Pol. Phil. b. 6, c. 10.

² Knox's Essays, No. 53.

³ Mor. and Pol. Phil. p. 266.

² Gisborne's Duties of Men.

⁴ Warburton's Letters to Hurd, No. 47.

⁶ Warburton's Letters to Hurd, No. 47.

I believe that (reverently be it spoken) *through the goodness of God*, there has been produced since the age of Hartley, a considerable improvement in the general character (at least of the inferior orders) of the English clergy. In observing the character which he exhibited, let it be remembered that that character was the legitimate offspring of the *state* religion. The subsequent amendment is the offspring of another and a very different and a purer parentage. "The superior clergy are in general ambitious and eager in the pursuit of riches; flatterers of the great, and subservient to party interest; negligent of their own immediate charges, and also of the inferior clergy and their immediate charges. The inferior clergy imitate their superiors, and in general take little more care of their parishes than barely what is necessary to avoid the censures of the law.—I say this is the general case; that is, far the greater part of the clergy of all ranks in this kingdom are of this kind."¹—These miserable effects upon the character of the clergy are the effects of a *Religious Establishment*. If any man is unwilling to admit the truth, let him adduce the instance of an *unestablished* church, in the past eighteen hundred years, in which such a state of things has existed. Of the times of Gregory Nazianzen, Bishop Burnet says,—“The best men of that age, instead of pressing into orders or aspiring to them, fled from them, excused themselves, and judging themselves unworthy of so holy a character and so high a trust, were not without difficulty prevailed upon to submit to that which, in degenerate ages, men run to as a subsistence or the means of procuring it.”²

It might almost be imagined that the right of *private patronage* was allowed for the express purpose of deteriorating the character of the ministers of religion,—because it can hardly be supposed that any church would allow such a system without a perfect consciousness of its effects. To allow any man or woman, good or bad, who has money to spend, to purchase the power of assigning a christian minister to a christian flock, is one of those desperate follies and enormities which should never be spoken of but in the language of detestation and horror.³ A man buys an advowson as he buys an estate, and for the same motives. He cares perhaps nothing for the religious consequences of his purchase, or for the religious assiduity of the person to whom he presents it. Nay, the case is worse than that of buying as you buy an estate; for land will not repay the occupier unless he cultivates it,—but the living is just as profitable whether he exerts himself zealously

¹ Hartley: *Observations on Man*.

² Disc. of the Pastoral Care, 12th ed. p. 77. "Under Lanfranc's primacy no promotion in the church was to be obtained by purchase, neither was any until person raised to the episcopal rank."^{*}

³ Upon such persons "rests the awful responsibility (I might almost call it the divine prerogative) of assigning a flock to the shepherd, and of selecting a shepherd for the flock." Gurney's Peculiarities, 3d ed. p. 164.

* Southey: *Book of the Church*, chap. 7.

or not. He who is unfit for the estate by want of industry or of talent, is nevertheless fit for the living! These are dreadful and detestable abuses. Christianity is not to be brought into juxtaposition with such things. It were almost a shame to allow a comparison. "Who is not aware that in consequence of the prevalence of such a system, the holy things of God are often miserably profaned?"¹—"It is our firm persuasion, that the present system of bestowing church patronage, is hastening the decay of morals, the progress of insubordination, and the downfall of the establishment itself." Morality and subordination have happily other supports:—the fate of the establishment is sealed. I say sealed. It cannot perpetually stand without thorough reformation; and it cannot be reformed while it remains an *establishment*.

Another mode in which the state religion of England is injurious to the character of its ministers, is by its allowance and practical encouragement of non-residence and pluralities. These are the natural effects of the principles of the system. It is very possible that there should be a state religion without them, but if the alliance with the state is close,—if a principal motive in the dispensation of benefices is the promotion of political purposes,—if the prizes of the church are given where interest and family connexions put in their claim,—it becomes extremely natural that several preferments should be bestowed upon one person. And when once this is countenanced or done by the state itself, inferior patrons will as naturally follow the example. The prelate who receives from the state three or four preferments, naturally gives to his son or his nephew three or four if he can.

Pluralities and non-residence, whatever may be said in their favour by politicians or divines, will always shock the common sense and the virtue of mankind. Unhappily, they are evils which seem to have increased. "Theodore, the seventh archbishop of Canterbury, restricted the bishops and secular clergy to their own dioceses;" and no longer ago than the reign of James I., "when pluralities were allowed, which was to be as seldom as possible, the livings were to be near each other."² But now we hear of one dignitary who possesses ten different preferments, and of another who, with an annual ecclesiastical revenue of fifteen thousand pounds, did not see his diocese for many years together.³ And as to that proximity of livings which was directed in James's time, they are now held in plurality not only at a distance from each other, but so as that the duties *cannot* be performed by one person.

Of the moral character of this deplorable custom, it is not necessary that we should speak. "I do not enter," says an eminent prelate, "into the scandalous practices of non-residence and pluralities. This is so shameful a profanation of holy things that it

¹ Christian Observer, v. 20, p. 11.

² Southey: *Book of the Church*, c. 6.

³ For these examples see Simpson's Plea. I say nothing of *present* examples.

ought to be treated with detestation and horror.”¹ Another friend of the church says, “He who grasps at the revenue of a benefice, and studies to evade the personal discharge of the various functions which that revenue is intended to reward, and the performance of those momentous duties to God and man, which, by accepting the living, he has undertaken, evinces either a most reprehensible neglect of proper consideration, or a callous depravity of heart.”² It may be believed that all are not thus depraved who accept pluralities without residence. Custom, although it does not alter the nature of actions, affects the character of the agent; and although I hold no man innocent in the sight of God who supports, in his example, this vicious practice, yet some may do it now with a less measure of guilt than that which would have attached to him who first, for the sake of money, introduced the scandal into the church.

The public has now the means of knowing, by the returns to parliament, the extent in which these scandalous customs exist—an extent which, when it was first communicated to the Earl of Harrowby, “struck me,” says he, “with surprise, I could almost say with horror.” Alas! when temporal peers are horror-struck by the scandals that are tolerated and practised by their spiritual teachers!

By one of these returns it appears that the whole number of places³ is ten thousand two hundred and sixty-one. Of the possessors of these livings, *more than one half were non-resident*. The number of residents was only four thousand four hundred and twenty-one.—But the reader will perhaps say, What matters the residence of him who receives the money, so that a curate resides? Unfortunately, the proportion of absentee curates is still greater than that of incumbents. Out of three thousand six hundred and ninety-four who are employed, only one thousand five hundred and eighty-seven live in the parishes they serve; so that two thousand one hundred and seven parishes are left without even the residence of a curate. Besides this, there are nine hundred and seventy incumbents who neither live in their parishes themselves nor employ any curate at all! What is the result? That above one-half of those who receive the stipends of the church, live away from their flocks; and that there are in this country three thousand and seventy-seven flocks amongst whom *no* shepherd is to be found!—When it is considered that all this is a *gratuitous* addition to the necessary evils of state religions, that there may be established churches without it, it speaks aloud of those mischiefs of our establishment which are peculiarly its own.

One other consideration upon this subject remains. An internal discipline in a church, both over its ministers and its members,

¹ Burnet: *Hist. Own Times*, v. 2, p. 646.

² Gisborne: *Duties of Men*.
³ The diocese of St. David's is not included, and the return includes some dignities, sinecures, and dilapidated churches. It cites that of 1810. I do not know but that the details are substantially the same at the present time.

appears essential to the proper exercise of christian duty. From what cause does it happen that there is little exercise of discipline, or none, in the church of England? The reader will perhaps answer the question to himself: “The exercise of efficient discipline in the church is *impossible*,” and he would answer truly. It is impossible. Who shall exercise it? The first Lord of the Treasury? He will not, and he cannot. The Bench of Bishops? Alas! *there* is the origin of a great portion of the delinquency. If they were to establish a discipline, the first persons upon whom they must exercise it would be themselves. Who ever heard of persons, so situated, instituting or re-establishing a discipline in the church? Who then shall exercise it? The subordinate clergy? If they have the will, they have not the power; and if they had the power, who can hope that they would use it? Who can hope that whilst above half of these clergy are non-residents they will erect a discipline by which residence shall be enforced?¹—I say, discipline, efficient discipline is impossible; and I submit it to the reader whether *any* Establishment in which Christian Discipline is impossible, is not essentially bad.

From the contemplation of these effects of the English establishment upon its formularies, its ministers and its discipline, we must turn to its effects generally upon the religious welfare of the people. This welfare is so involved with the general character of the establishment and its ministers, that to exhibit an evil in one is to illustrate an injury to the other. If the operation of the state religion prevents ministers from inculcating some portions of divine truth, its operation must indeed be bad. And how stands the fact? “Aspiring clergymen, wishing to avoid every doctrine which would retard their advancement, were very little inclined to preach the reality or necessity of divine influence.”² The evil which this indicates is twofold: first, the vicious state of the heads of the church; for why else should “advancement” be refused to those who preached the doctrine of the gospel; and next, the injury to religion; for religion must needs be injured if a portion of its truths are concealed. Another quotation gives a similar account: “Regular divines of great virtue, learning, and apparent piety, *feared* to preach the Holy Ghost and his operations, the main doctrines of the gospel, lest they should countenance the puritan, the quaker, or the methodist, and lose the esteem of their own order or of the higher powers.”³ Did Paul or Barnabas ever “fear to preach the main doctrines of the gospel” from considerations like these or from any considerations whatever? Did our Lord approve or tolerate such fear when he

¹ Here it may be observed how *imperfect* is the argument (see Paley) that a religious establishment does good by keeping an enlightened man in *each* parish. Mem. in the MS.

² Vicesimus Knox: *Christian Philosophy*, third edition, p. 24.

³ Ibid. p. 23.

threatened with punishment any man who should take away from the words of his book? But why again should the clerical order or the higher powers disesteem the man who preached the main doctrines of the gospel, unless it were from motives of interest founded in the establishment?

And thus it is, that they who are assumed to be the religious leaders of the people, who ought, so far as is in their power, to guide the people into *all* truth, conceal a portion of that truth from motives of interest! If this concealment is practised by men of great virtue, learning, and apparent piety, what are we to expect in the indifferent or the bad! We are to expect that not one but many doctrines of the gospel will be concealed. We are to expect that discourses not very different from those which Socrates might have delivered will be dispensed, instead of the whole counsel of God. What has been the fact? Of "moral preaching," Bishop Lavington says, "We have long been attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? *None at all.* On the contrary we have dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity." Will any man affirm that this has not been the consequence of the state religion? Will any man, knowing this, affirm that a state religion is right or useful to christianity?

But as to the tendency of the system to diffuse infidelity, we are not possessed of the testimony of Bishop Lavington alone. "It is evident that the worldly-mindedness and neglect of duty in the clergy, is a great scandal to religion, and cause of infidelity."¹ Again: "Who is to blame for the spread of infidelity? The bishops and clergy of the land more than any other people in it. We, as a body of men, are almost solely and exclusively culpable."² Ostervald in his "Treatise concerning the Causes of the present corruption of Christians," makes the same remark of the clergy of other churches;—"The cause of the corruption of christians is chiefly to be found in the clergy." Now supposing this to be the language of exaggeration,—supposing that they corrupt christians only as much as men who make no peculiar pretensions to religion,—how can such a fact be accounted for, but by the conclusion that there is something *corrupting* in the clerical system?

The refusal to amend the constitution or formularies of the church is another powerful cause of injury to religion. Of one particular article, the Athanasian creed, a friend of the church, and one who mixed with the world, says, "I really believe that creed has made more deists than all the writings of all the opugners of christianity since it was first unfortunately adopted in our liturgy."³ Would this deist-making document have been retained till now if the church were not allied to the state?—Bishop Watson uses language so unsparing, that, just and true as it is, I

¹ Hartley: *Observations on Man.*

² Simpson's Plea, 3d edit. p. 76.

³ *Observations on the Liturgy*, by an Under Secretary of State.

know not whether I would cite it from any other pen than a bishop's,— "A motley monster of bigotry and superstition, a scarecrow of shreds and patches, dressed up of old by philosophers and popes, to amuse the speculative and to affright the ignorant;" —do I quote this because it is the unsparing language of truth? No, but because of that which succeeds it,— "now," says the bishop, "a butt of scorn, against which every unledged witling of the age essays his wanton efforts, and, before he has learned his catechism, is fixed *an infidel for life!*" This I am persuaded is too frequently the case, for I have had too frequent opportunities to observe it.⁴ If by the church as it subsists, many are fixed infidels for life, how diffusely must be spread that minor but yet practical disrespect for religion, which, though it amounts not to infidelity, makes religion an unoperative thing,—unoperative upon the conduct and the heart,—unoperative in animating the love and hope of the christian,—unoperative in supporting under affliction, and in smoothing and brightening the pathway to the grave!

To these minor consequences also we have unambiguous testimony.— "Where there is not this open and shameless disavowal of religion, few traces of it are to be found. Improving in every other branch of knowledge, we have become less and less acquainted with christianity."⁵ — "Two-thirds of the lower order of people in London," says Sir Thomas Bernard, "live as utterly ignorant of the doctrines and duties of christianity, and are as errant and unconverted *pagans*, as if they had existed in the wildest part of Africa." — "The case," continues the Quarterly Review, "is the same in Manchester, Leeds, Bristol, Sheffield, and in all our large towns; the greatest part of the manufacturing populace, of the miners, and colliers are in the *same* condition; and if they are not universally so, it is more owing to the zeal of the methodists than to any other cause."⁶ How is it accounted for that in a country in which a teacher is appointed to diffuse christianity in every parish, a considerable part of the population are confessed to be absolute *pagans*? How, especially is it accounted for that the few who are reclaimed from paganism, are reclaimed not by the established, but by an unestablished church? It is not difficult to account for all this, if the condition of the established church is such as to make what follows the flippant language of a clergyman who afterwards was a bishop: "The person I engaged in the summer," as a curate, "is run away; as you will think natural enough when I tell you he was let out of jail to be promoted to this service."⁷

The ill effect of non-residence upon the general interests of religion is necessarily great. A conscientious clergyman finds that the offices of his pulpit are not the half of his business: he finds that he can often do more in promoting the religious welfare of his

¹ *Misc. Tracts by Watson, Bishop of Landaff*, v. 2, p. 49.

² *Wilberforce: Practical View*, 6th edit. p. 389.

³ *Quarterly Review*, April 1816, p. 233.

⁴ *Letters between Bishop Warburton and Bishop Hurd*.

parishioners, out of his pulpit than in it. It is out of his pulpit that he evinces and exercises the most unequivocal affection for his charge; that he encourages or warns as *individuals* have need; that he animates by the presence of his constant example; that he consoles them in their troubles; that he adjusts their disagreements; that he assists them by his advice. It is by living amongst them, and by that alone, that he can be "instant in season and out of season," or that he can fulfil the duties which his station involves. How prodigious then must be the sum of mischief which the non-residence of three thousand clergymen inflicts upon religion! How yet more prodigious must be the sum of mischief which results from that negligence of duty of which non-residence is but *one effect*! Yet all this is occasioned by our religious establishment. "The total absence of non-residence and pluralities in the church of Scotland, and the annual examination of all the inhabitants of the parish by its minister, are circumstances highly advantageous to religion."¹

The minister in the English church is under peculiar disadvantages in enforcing the truths or the duties of religion upon irreligious or sceptical men. Many of the topics which such men urge are directed not against christianity but against *that exhibition* of christianity which is afforded by the church. It has been seen that *this* is the cause of infidelity. How then shall the established clergyman efficiently defend our religion? He may indeed confine himself to the vindication of christianity without reference to a church: but then he does not defend that exhibition of christianity which his own church affords. The sceptic presses him with those things which it is confessed are wrong. He must either defend them or give them up as indefensible. If he defends them he confirms the sceptic in his unbelief: if he gives them up, he declares not only that the church is in the wrong, but that himself is in the wrong too: and in either case, his fitness for an advocate of our religion is impaired.

Hitherto, I have enforced the observations of this chapter by the authority of others. Now I have to appeal for confirmation to the experience of the reader himself. That peculiar mode of injury to the cause of virtue of which I speak, has received its most extensive illustrations during the present century; and it has hitherto perhaps been the subject rather of private remark than of public disquisition. I refer to a sort of instinctive recoil from new measures that are designed to promote the intellectual, the moral, or the religious improvement of the public. I appeal to the experience of those philanthropic men who spend their time either in their own neighbourhoods, or in "going about, doing good;" whether they do not meet with a greater degree of this recoil from works of philanthropy, amongst the teachers and members of the state religion than amongst other men,—and whether this recoil is not the strongest amongst that portion who are reputed to be the

¹ Gisborne: *Duties of Men.*

most zealous friends of the church. Has not this been your experience with respect to the Slave Trade and to Slavery,—with respect to the education of the people,—with respect to scientific or literary institutions for the labouring ranks,—with respect to sending preachers to pagan countries,—with respect to the Bible Society? Is it not familiar to you to be in doubt and apprehension respecting the assistance of *these* members of the establishment, when you have no fear and no doubt of the assistance of other christians? Do you not call upon others and invite their co-operation with confidence? Do you not call upon these with distrust, and is not that distrust the result of your previous experience?

Take, for example, that very simple institution the Bible Society,—simple, because its only object is to distribute the authorized records of the dispensations of God. It is an institution upon which it may be almost said that but one opinion is entertained,—that of its great utility; but one desire is felt,—that of co-operation, *except* by the members of established churches. From this institution the most zealous advocates of the English church stand aloof. Whilst christians of other names are friendly almost to a man, the proportion is very large of *those* churchmen who show no friendliness. It were to no purpose to say that they have claims peculiarly upon themselves, for so have other christians,—claims which generally are complied with to a greater extent. Besides, it is obvious that these claims are not the grounds of the conduct that we deplore. If they were, we should still possess the cordial approbation of these persons,—their personal, if not their pecuniary support. From such persons silence and absence are positive discouragement. How then are we to account for the phenomenon? By the operation of a state religion. For when our philanthropist applies to the members of another church, their only question perhaps is, Will the projected institution be useful to mankind? But when he applies to such a member of the state religion, he considers,—How will it affect the establishment? Will it increase the influence of dissenters? May it not endanger the immunities of the church? Is it countenanced by our superiors? Is it agreeable to the administration? And when all these considerations have been pursued, he very commonly finds something that persuades him that it is most "prudent" not to encourage the proposition. It should be remarked too, as an additional indication of the *cause* of this recoil from works of goodness, that where the genius of the state religion is most influential, there is commonly the greatest backwardness in works of mental and religious philanthropy. The places of peculiar frigidity are the places in which there are the greatest number of the dignitaries of the church.

Thus it is that the melioration of mankind is continually and greatly impeded, by the workings of an institution of which the express design is to extend the influence of religion and morality.

Greatly impeded: for England is one of the principal sources of the current of human improvement, and in England the influence of this institution is great. These are fruits which are not borne by good and healthy trees. How can the tree be good of which these are the fruits? Are these fruits the result of episcopacy? No, but of *episcopacy wedded to the state*. Were this union dissolved, (and the parties are not of that number whom *God* hath joined,) not only would human reformation go forward with an accelerated pace, but episcopalianism itself would in some degree arise and shake herself as from the dust of the earth. She would find that her political alliance has bound around her glittering but yet enslaving chains,—chains which hugged and cherished as they are, have ever fixed her, and ever will fix her, to the earth, and make her earthly.

The mode in which the legal provision for the ministry is made in this country, contains, like many other parts of the institution, evils superadded to those which are necessarily incidental to a state religion. If there be any one thing which, more than another, ought to prevail between a christian minister and those whom he teaches, it is harmony and kindness of feeling: and this kindness and harmony is peculiarly diminished by the system of tithes. There is no circumstance which so often "disturbs the harmony that should ever subsist between a clergyman and his parishioners as contentions respecting tithes."¹ Vicesimus Knox goes further: "One great cause of the clergy's losing their influence is, that the laity in this age of scepticism grudge them their tithes. The decay of religion and the contempt of the clergy arise in a great measure from this source."² What advantages can compensate for the contempt of christian ministers and the decay of religion? Or who does not perceive that a legal provision might be made which would be productive, so far as the new system of itself was concerned, of fewer evils? Of the political ill consequences of the Tithe system I say nothing here. If they were much less than they are, or if they did not exist at all, there is sufficient evidence against the system in its moral effects.

It is well known, and the fact is very creditable, that the clergy exact tithes with much less rigour and consequently occasion far fewer heart-burnings than lay claimants. The want of cordiality often results too from the cupidity of the payers, who invent vexatious excuses to avoid payment of the whole claim, and are on the alert to take disreputable advantages.

But to the conclusions of the christian moralist it matters little by what agency a bad system operates. The principal point of his attention is the system itself. If it be bad, it will be sure to find agents by whom its pernicious principles will be elicited and brought into practical operation. It is therefore no extenuation of the system, that the clergy frequently do not disagree with their parishioners: whilst it is a part of the system that tithes are sold

¹ Gisborne: *Duties of Men*.

² *Essays*, No. 10.

and sold to him, of whatever character, who will give most for them—he will endeavour to make the most of them again. So that the evils which result from the Tithe system, although they are not chargeable upon religious establishments, are chargeable upon our own, and are an evidence against it. The animosities which Tithe farmers occasion are attributable to the Tithe system. Ordinary men do not make nice discriminations. He who is angry with the Tithe farmer is angry with the rector who puts the power of vexation into his hands, and he who is out of temper with the teacher of religion loses some of his complacency in religion itself. You cannot then prevent the loss of harmony between the shepherd and his flock, the loss of his influence over their affections, the contempt of the clergy, and the decay of religion, from tithes. You must amend the civil institution or you cannot prevent the religious mischief.

Reviewing then the propositions and arguments which have been delivered in the present chapter—propositions which rest upon the authority of the parties concerned, what is the general conclusion? If Religious Establishments are constitutionally injurious to christianity, is not our establishment productive of superadded and accumulated injury?—Let not the writer of these pages be charged with enmity to religion because he thus speaks. Ah! they are the best friends of the church who endeavour its amendment. I may be one of those who, in the language of Lord Bexley, shall be regarded as an enemy because, in the exhibition of its evils, I have used great plainness of speech. But I cannot help it. I have other motives than those which are affected by these censures of men; and shall be content to bear my portion, if I can promote that purification of a christian church, of which none but the prejudiced or the interested deny the need.—They who endeavour to conceal the need may be the advocates but they are not the *friends* of the church. The wound of the daughter of my people may not be slightly healed. It is vain to cry Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. What then will the reader who has noticed the testimonies which have been offered in this chapter think of the propriety of such statements as these? The "establishment is the firmest support and noblest ornament of christianity."¹ It "presents the best security under heaven for the preservation of the true apostolical faith in this country."² "Manifold as are the blessings for which Englishmen are beholden to the institutions of their country, there is no part of those institutions from which they derive more important advantages than from its church establishment."³—Especially what will the reader think of the language of Hannah More?—Hannah More says of the established church, "Here christianity presents her-

¹ Dr. Howley, *Bishop of London: Charge*, 1814, p. 25.

² *On the Nature of Schism*, by C. Daubeny, *Archdeacon of Sarum*, p. 153.

³ First words of *Southey's Book of the Church*.

self neither dishonoured, degraded, nor disfigured ;" Bishop Watson says of its creed, that it is "a motley monster of bigotry and superstition." Hannah More says, "Here christianity is set before us in all her original purity ;" Archdeacon Blackburn says that "the forms of the church having been weighed in the balance of the sanctuary are found greatly wanting." Hannah More says, "She has been *completely rescued* from that encumbering load under which she had so long groaned, and delivered from her heavy bondage by the labours of our blessed reformers ;"¹ Dr. Lowth says that the reformation from popery "stopped in the midway." Hannah More says, "We here see christianity in her whole consistent character, in all her fair and just proportions, as she came from the hands of her divine author ;" Dr. Watson calls her creed "a scarecrow, dressed up of old by philosophers and popes." To say that the language of this good woman is imprudent and improper, is to say very little. Yet I would say no more. Her own language is her severest censurer. When will it be sufficiently remembered that the evils of a system can neither be veiled nor defended by praise ? When will it be remembered that if we "contend for abuses" the hour will arrive when "correction will be applied with no sparing hand ?"

It has frequently been said that "the church is in danger." What is meant by the church ? Or what is it that is endangered ? Is it meant that the episcopal form of church government is endangered—that some religious revolution is likely to take place, by which a christian community shall be precluded from adopting that internal constitution which it thinks best ? This surely cannot be feared. The day is gone by, in England at least, when the abolition of prelacy could become a measure of state. One community has its conference, and another its annual assembly, and another its independency, without any molestation. Who then would molest the English church because it prefers the government of bishops and deacons to any other ? Is it meant that the *doctrines* of the church are endangered, or that its liturgy will be prohibited ? Surely no. Whilst every other church is allowed to preach what doctrines it pleases, and to use what formularies it pleases, the liberty will not surely be denied to the episcopal church. If the doctrines and government of that church be christian and true, there is no reason to fear for their stability. Its members have superabundant ability to defend the truth. What then is it that is endangered ? Of what are those who complain of danger afraid ? Is it meant that its civil immunities are endangered—that its revenues are endangered ? Is it meant that its members will hereafter have to support their ministers without assistance from other churches ? Is

¹ Moral Sketches, 3d edit. p. 90.

it feared that there will cease to be such things as rich deaneries and bishopricks ? Is it feared that the members of other churches will become eligible to the legislature, and that the heads of this church will not be temporal peers ? In brief, is it feared that this church will become merely one amongst the many, with no privileges but such as are common to good citizens and good christians ?—These surely are the things of which they are afraid. It is not for religious truth, but for civil immunities : it is not for forms of church government, but for political pre-eminence : it is not for the church but for the church *establishment*. Let a man then, when he joins in the exclamation, the church is in danger, present to his mind distinct ideas of his meaning and of the object of his fears. If his alarm and his sorrow are occasioned not for religion but for politics—not for the purity and usefulness of the church but for its immunities—not for the offices of its ministers but for their splendours—let him be at peace. There is nothing in all this for which the christian needs to be in sorrow or in fear.

And why ? Because all that constitutes a church, as a christian community, may remain when these things are swept away. There may be prelates without nobility ; there may be deans and archdeacons without benefices and patronage ; there may be pastors without a legal provision ; there may be a liturgy without a test.

In the sense in which it is manifest that the phrase, "the church is in danger," is ordinarily to be understood, that is—"the *establishment* is in danger"—the fears are undoubtedly well founded : the danger is real and imminent. It may not be immediate perhaps ; perhaps it may not be near at hand ; but it is real, imminent, inevitable. The establishment is indeed in danger ; and I believe that no advocacy however zealous, that no support however determined, that no power however great, will preserve it from destruction. If the declarations which have been cited in this chapter be true—if the reasonings which have been offered in this and in the last be just, who is the man that, *as a christian*, regrets its danger or would delay its fall ? He may wish to delay it as a politician ; he may regret it as an expectant of temporal advantages, but as a christian he will rejoice.

Supposing the doctrines and government of the church to be sound, it is probable that its stability would be increased by what is called its destruction. It would then only be detached from that alliance with the state which encumbers it, and weighs it down, and despoils its beauty, and obscures its brightness. Contention for this alliance will eventually be found to illustrate the proposition, that a man's greatest enemies are those of his own household. *He* is the practical enemy of the church, who endeavours the continuance of its connexion with the state : except indeed that the more zealous the endeavour the more quickly, it is probable, the connexion will be dissolved ; and therefore though

such persons "mean not so, neither do their hearts think so," yet they may thus be the agents in the hand of God of hastening the day in which she shall be purified from every evil thing; in which she shall arise and shine, because her light is come, and because the glory of the Lord is risen upon her.

Let him, then, who can discriminate between the church and its alliances, consider these things. Let him purify and exalt his attachment. If his love to the church be the love of a christian, let him avert his eye from every thing that is political; let his hopes and fears be excited only by religion; and let his exertions be directed to that which alone ought to concern a christian church, its purity and its usefulness.

In concluding a discussion in which it has been needful to utter, with plainness, unwelcome truths, and to adduce testimonies which some readers may wish to be concealed, I am solicitous to add the conviction, with respect to the *ministers* of the English church, that there is happily a diminished ground of complaint and reprehension—the conviction that whilst the liturgy is unamended and unrevised, the number of ministers is increased to whom temporal things are secondary motives, and who endeavour to be faithful ministers of one common Lord: the conviction too, with respect to other members of the church, that they are collectively advancing in the christian path, and that there is an "evident extension of religion within her borders." Many of these, both of the teachers and of the taught, are persons with whom the writer of these pages makes no pretensions of christian equality—yet even to these he would offer one monitory suggestion—They are critically situated with reference to the political alliance of the church. Let them beware that they mingle not, with their good works and faith unfeigned, any confederacy with that alliance which will assuredly be laid in the dust. That confederacy has ever had one invariable effect—to diminish the christian brightness of those who are its partisans. It will have the same effect upon them. If they are desirous of superadding to their christianity, the privileges and emoluments of a state religion—if they endeavour to retain in the church the interest of both worlds—if, together with their desire to serve God with a pure heart, they still cling to the advantages which this unholy alliance brings,—and, contending for the faith contend also for the establishment—the effect will be bad as the endeavour will be vain; bad, for it will obstruct their own progress and the progress of others in the christian path; and vain, for the fate of that establishment is sealed.

In making these joyful acknowledgments of the increase of christianity within the borders of the church, one truth however must be added; and it is a solemn truth—The increase is not

attributable to the state religion, but has taken place *notwithstanding* it is a state religion. I appeal to the experience of good men: has the amendment been the effect of the establishment as such? Has the political connexion of the church occasioned the amendment or promoted it? Nay—Has the amendment been encouraged by those on whom the political connexion had the greatest influence? No: the reader, if he be an observer of religious affairs, knows that the state alliance is so far from having effected a reformation, that it does not even regard the instruments of that reformation with complacency.

SECTION III.

OF LEGAL PROVISION FOR CHRISTIAN TEACHERS.

By one of those instances which happily are not unfrequent in the progress of human opinion from error to truth, the notion of a *divine right* on the part of any christian teachers to a stated portion of the products of other men's labours, is now nearly given up.¹ There was a time when the advocate of the claim would have disdained to refer for its foundation to questions of expediency or the law of the land. And he probably as little thought that the divine right would ever have been given up by its advocates, as his successors now think that they have fallacious grounds in reasoning upon public utility. Thus it is that the labours of our predecessors in the cause of christian purity have taken a large portion of labour out of our hands. They carried the outworks of the citadel; and whilst its defenders have retired to some inner strong hold, it becomes the business of our day to essay the firmness of its walls. The writer of these pages may

¹ Yet let it not be forgotten that it is upon this exploded notion of the Divine right, that the legal right is founded. The law did not give Tithes to the Clergy because the provision was expedient, but because it was their Divine right. It is upon this assumption that the law is founded. See Statutes at Large: 29 Hen. VIII. c. 20. Mem. in the MS.

"The whole was received into a common fund, for the fourfold purpose of supporting the clergy, repairing the church, relieving the poor, and entertaining the pilgrim and the stranger."—"The payment of Tithes had at first been voluntary, though it was considered as a religious obligation. King Ethelwolf, the father of Alfred, subjected the whole kingdom to it by a legislative act." Southey's Book of the Church, c. 6. Mem. in the MS.

Wickliffe's followers asserted "that Tithes were purely eleemosynary, and might be withheld by the people upon a delinquency in the pastor, and transferred to another at pleasure." Brodie's History of the British Empire. Introduction. Mem. in the MS.

essay them in vain; but he doubts not that before some power their defenders, as they have hitherto retired, will continue to retire, until the whole fortress is abandoned. Abandoned to the enemy? Oh no—He is the *friend* of a christian community, who induces christian principles into its practice.

In considering the evidence which christianity affords respecting the lawfulness of making a legal provision for one christian church, I would not refer to those passages of scripture which appear to bear upon the question whether christian ministrations should be absolutely free: partly, because I can add nothing to the often-urged tendency of those passages, and partly, because they do not all concern the question of legal provision. The man who thinks christianity requires that those who labour in the gospel should live of the gospel, does not *therefore* think that a legal provision should be made for the ministers of one exclusive church.

One thing seems perfectly clear—that to receive from their hearers and from those who hear them not, a compulsory payment for their preaching, is totally alien to all the practices of the apostles and to the whole tenor of the principles by which they were actuated. Their one single and simple motive in preaching christianity, was to obey God; to do good to man; nor do I believe that any man imagines it possible that they would have accepted of a compulsory remuneration from their own hearers, and especially from those who heard them not. We are therefore entitled to repeat the observation, that this consideration affords evidence against the moral lawfulness of instituting such compulsory payment. Why would not, and could not, the apostles have accepted such payment, except for the reason that it *ought* not to be enforced? No account, so far as I perceive, can be given of the matter, but that the system is contrary to the purity of christian practice.

An English prelate writes thus: “It is a question which might admit of serious discussion, whether the majority of the members of any civil community *have a right* to compel all the members of it to pay towards the maintenance of a set of teachers appointed by the majority to preach a particular system of doctrines.”¹* No discussion could be entertained respecting this right, except on the ground of its christian unlawfulness. A legislature has a right to impose a general tax to support a government, whether a minority approve the tax or not; and the bishop here rightly assumes that there is an antecedent question,—whe-

¹ See Quarterly Review, No. 58.

* “There was a party in the nation who conceived that every man should not only be allowed to choose his own religion, but contribute as he himself thought proper towards the support of the pastor whose duties he exacted. The party however does not appear to have been great. Yet let us not despise the opinion, but remember that it has been taken up by Dr. Adam Smith himself as a sound one, and been acted upon successfully in a vast empire, the United States of America.” Brodie’s History of the British Empire, v. 4, p. 365. Mem. in the MS.

ther it is morally lawful to oblige men to pay teachers whom they disapprove? It is from the want of taking this question into the account that inquirers have involved themselves in fallacious reasonings. It is not a question of the right of taxation, but of the right of the magistrate to oblige men to violate their consciences. Of those who have regarded it simply as a question of taxation, and who therefore have proceeded upon fallacious grounds, the author of “The Duties of Men in Society” is one. He says, “If a state thinks that national piety and virtue will be best promoted by consigning the whole sum raised by law to teachers of a particular description,—it has the same right to adopt this measure, as it would have to impose a general tax for the support of a board of physicians, should it deem that step conducive to national health.” Far other—No man’s christian liberty is invaded, no man’s conscience is violated, by paying a tax to a board of physicians; but many a man’s religious liberty may be invaded, and many a man’s conscience may be violated, by paying for the promulgation of doctrines which he thinks christianity condemns. Whither will the argument lead us? If a papal state thinks it will promote piety to demand contributions for the splendid celebration of an *auto de fé*, would protestant citizens act rightly in contributing? Or would the state act rightly in demanding the contribution? Or has a Bramin state a right to impose a tax upon christian residents to pay for the faggots of Hindoo immolations? The antecedent question in all these cases is,—Whether the immolation, and the *auto de fé*, and the system of doctrines, are consistent with christianity. If they are not, the citizen ought not to contribute to their practice or diffusion; and by consequence, the state ought not to compel him to contribute. Now, for the purposes of the present argument, the consistency of any set of doctrines with christianity cannot be proved. It is to no purpose for the unitarian to say—*My system is true*; nor for the calvinist or arminian or episcopalian to say, *My system is true*. The unitarian has no christian right to compel me to pay him for preaching unitarianism, nor has any religious community a right to compel the members of another to pay him for promulgating his own opinions.

If by any revolution in the religious affairs of this country, another sect were elevated to the pre-eminence, and its ministers supported by a legal provision, I believe that the ministers of the present church would think it an unreasonable and unchristian act, to compel them to pay the preachers of the new state religion. Would not a clergyman think himself aggrieved, if he were obliged to pay a Priestley, and to aid in disseminating the opinions of Priestley?—That same grievance is now inflicted upon other men. The rule is disregarded, to do as we would be done by.

Let us turn to the example of America. In America the go-

vernment does not oblige its citizens to pay for the support of preachers. Those who join themselves to any particular religious community commonly contribute towards the support of its teachers, but there is no law of the state which compels it. This is as it should be. The government which *obliged* its citizens to pay, even if it were left to the individual to say to what class of preachers his money should be given, would act upon unsound principles. It may be that the citizen does not approve of paying ministers at all; or there may be no sect in a country with which he thinks it right to hold communion. How would the reader himself be situated in Spain perhaps, or in Turkey, or in Hindostan? Would he think it right to be obliged to encourage Juggernaut, or Mahomet, or the Pope?

But, passing from this consideration: it is after all said, that in our own country the individual citizen does not *pay* the ministers of the state religion. I am glad that this seeming paradox is advanced, because it indicates that those who advance it confess that to make them pay would be wrong. Why else should they deny it? It is said, then, that persons who pay tithes do not *pay* the established clergy; that tithes are property held as a person holds an estate; that if tithes were taken off, rents would advance to the same amount; that the buyer of an estate pays so much the less for it because it is subject to tithes,—and therefore that neither owner nor occupier pays any thing. This is specious, but only specious. The landholder “pays” the clergyman just as he pays the tax-gatherer. If taxes were taken off rents would advance just as much as if tithes were taken off; and a person may as well say that he does not pay taxes as that he does not pay tithes.—The simple fact is that an order of clergy are, in this respect, in the same situation as the body of stockholders who live upon their dividends. They are supported by the country. The people pay the stockholder in the form of taxes, and the clergyman in the form of tithes. Suppose every clergyman in England were to leave the country to-morrow, and to cease to derive any income from it, it is manifest that the income which they now derive would be divided amongst those who remain,—that is, that those who now pay would cease to pay. Rent, and Taxes, and Tithes, are in these respects upon one footing. Without now inquiring whether they are right, they are all payments,—something by which a man does not receive the whole of the product of his labour.

The argument, therefore, which affirms that dissenters from the state religion do not pay to that religion, appears to be wholly fallacious; and being such, we are at liberty to assume, that to make them pay is indefensible and unchristian. For we repeat the observation, that he who is anxious to prove they do not pay, evinces his opinion that to compel them to pay would be wrong.

There is some injustice in the legal provision for one church. The episcopalian when he has paid his teacher, or rather when he has contributed that portion towards the maintenance of his teacher which by the present system becomes his share, has no more to pay. The adherent to other churches has to pay his own preacher and his neighbour's. This does not appear to be just. The operation of a legal provision is, in effect, to impose a double tax upon one portion of the community without any fault on their part. Nor is it to any purpose to say that the dissenter from the episcopalian church imposes the tax on himself: so he does; but it is just in the same sense as a man imposes a penalty upon himself when he conforms to some prohibited point of christian duty. A papist, two or three centuries ago, might almost as well have said that a protestant imposed the stake on himself, because he might have avoided it if he chose. It is a voluntary tax in no other way than as all other taxes are voluntary. It is a tax imposed by the state as truly as the window tax is imposed, because a man may, if he please, live in darkness; or as a capitation tax is imposed, because a man may, if he please, lose his head.

But what is he who conscientiously disapproves of a state religion to do? Is he, notwithstanding his judgment, to aid in supporting that religion, *because* the law requires it? No: for then, as it respects him, the obligation of the law is taken away. He is not to do what he believes christianity forbids, because the state commands it. If public practice be a criterion of the public judgment, it may be concluded that the number of those who do thus believe respecting our state religion, is very small; for very few decline actively to support it. Yet when it is considered how numerous the dissenters from the English establishment are, and how emphatically some of them disapprove the forms or doctrines of that establishment, it might be imagined that the number who decline thus to support it would, in consistency, be great. How are we to account for the fact as it is? Are we to suppose that the objections of these persons to the establishment are such as do not make it a case of conscience whether they shall support it or not? Or are we to conclude that they sacrifice their consciences to the terrors of a restraint? If no case of conscience is involved, the dissenter, though he may think the state religion inexpedient, can hardly think it wrong. And if he do not think it *wrong*, why should he be so zealous in opposing it, or why should he expect the church to make concessions in his favour? If on the other hand he sacrifice his conscience to his fears, it is obvious that, before he reprehends the establishment, he should rectify himself. He should leave the mote, till he has taken out the beam.

Perhaps there are some who, seriously disapproving of the state religion, suspect that in christian integrity they ought not to pay to its support,—and yet are not so fully convinced of this, or do

not so fully act upon the conviction, as really to decline to pay. If they are convinced, let them remember their responsibility, and not know their master's will in vain. If these are not faithful, where shall fidelity be found? How shall the christian churches be purified from their defilements, if those who see and deplore their defilements contribute to their continuance? Let them show that their principles are worthy a little sacrifice. Fidelity on their part, and a christian submission to the consequences, might open the eyes and invigorate the religious principle of many more: and at length the objection to comply with these unchristian demands might be so widely extended, that the legislature would be induced to withdraw its legal provision; and thus one main constituent of an ecclesiastical system which has grievously obstructed, and still grievously obstructs, the christian cause, might be taken away.

As an objection to this fidelity of practice it has been said, that since a man rents or buys an estate for so much less because it is subject to tithes, it is an act of dishonesty, afterwards, to refuse to pay them. The answer is this—that no dishonesty can be committed whilst the law exacts payment by distress; and if the law were altered, there is no place for dishonesty. Besides, the desire of saving money does not enter into the refuser's motives. He does not decline to pay from motives of interest but from motives of duty.

It is however argued that the legislature has no *right* to take away tithes any more than it has a right to deprive citizens of their lands and houses; and that a man's property in tithes is upon a footing with his property in an estate. Now we answer that this is not true in fact; and that if it were it would not serve the argument.

It is not true in fact.—If tithes were a property, just *as* an estate is a property, why do men complain of the scandal of pluralities? Who ever hears of the scandal of possessing three or four estates?—Why again does the law punish simoniacial contracts? Who ever hears of simoniacial contracts for lands and houses? The truth is, that tithes are regarded as religious property—The property is legally recognized not for the sake of the individual who may possess it but for the sake of religion. The law cares nothing for the men, except so far as they are ministers.—Besides, tithes are a portion of the *produce* only of the land. The tithe owner cannot walk over an estate and say, of every tenth acre, this is mine. In truth he has not, except by consent of the landholder, any property in it at all; for the landholder may if he please, refuse to cultivate it,—occasion it to produce nothing; and then the tithe owner has no interest or property in it whatever. And in what sense can that be said to be property, the possession of which is at the absolute discretion of another man?

But grant, for a moment, that tithes are property. Is it affirmed that whatever property a man possesses, cannot be taken from him by the legislature? Suppose I go to Jamaica and purchase a slave and bring him to England, has the law no right to take this property away? Assuredly it has the right, and it exercises it too. Now, so far as the argument is concerned, the cases of the slave-holder and of the tithe-owner are parallel. Compulsory maintenance of christian ministers, and compulsory retention of men in bondage, are *both inconsistent with christianity*; and as such, the property which consists in slaves, and in tithes, may rightly be taken away.—Unless indeed any man will affirm that any property, however acquired, cannot lawfully be taken from the possessor. But when we speak of taking away the property in tithes, we do not refer to the consideration that it has been under the sanction of the law itself that that property has been purchased or obtained. The law has, in reality, been accessory to the offence, and it would not be decent or right to take away the possession which has resulted from that offence, without offering an equivalent. I would not advise a legislature to say to those persons who, under its own sanction, have purchased slaves, to turn upon them and say, I am persuaded that slavery is immoral, and therefore I command you to set your slaves at liberty;—and because you have no moral right to hold them, I shall not grant you a compensation. Nor, for the same reasons, would I advise a legislature to say so to the possessor of tithes.

But what sort of a compensation is to be offered? Not surely an amount equivalent to the principal money, computing tithes as interest. The compensation is for life interest only. The legislature would have to buy off, not a freehold but an annuity. The tithe owner is not like the slave holder, who can bequeath his property to another. When the present incumbent dies, the tithes, as property, cease to exist,—until it is again appropriated to an incumbent by the patron of the living. This is true except in the instances of those deplorable practices, the purchase of advowsons, or of any other by which individuals or bodies acquire a pecuniary interest in the right of disposal.

The notion that tithes are a “property of the church,” is quite a fiction. In this sense, what is the church? If no individual man has his property taken away by a legislative abolition of tithes, it is unmeaning to talk of “the church” having lost it.

It is perhaps a vain thing to talk of *how* the legislature might do a thing which perhaps it may not resolve, for ages, to do at all. But if it were to take away the right to tithes as the present incumbents died, or as the interests of the present owners ceased, there would be no reason to complain of injustice, whatever there might be of procrastinating the fulfilment of a christian duty.

Whether a good man, knowing the inconsistency of forced maintenance with the christian law, ought to accept a proffered equivalent for that maintenance, is another consideration. If it is wrong to retain it, it is not obvious how it can be right, or how at least it can avoid the appearance of evil, to accept money for giving it up. It is upon these principles that the religious community who decline to pay tithes, decline also to receive them. By legacy or otherwise, the legal right is sometimes possessed by these persons, but their moral discipline requires alike a refusal to *receive* or to *pay*.

END.

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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